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MARCH 2007

WORLD SOCCER comment

WILL IT TAKE the death of a police officer during a riot outside the Sicilian derby between Catania and Palermo to force the Italian authorities into finally taking serious action to deal with football-related violence? At the time of going to press, tough new measures were being unveiled by the Italian government. They included the closure of all but six stadiums in what has been the strongest governmental response to the problem.

But already Italy's clubs were showing signs of opposition; some players, too, were threatening to strike if some clubs are allowed to play in front of crowds and others refused. It's far too early to know whether the government action will have the desired effect. But the experience of last summer's match-fixing scandal – when the strong punishments were watered down on appeal until most became meaningless – does not bode well.

The situation in England in the 1980s and 1990s is often cited as an example of how to deal with hooliganism. But the Taylor Report and the move to all-seater stadiums were a response to Bradford and Hillsborough, not hooliganism. It was the subsequent influx of new fans and new money, not government legislation, that did most to drive hooligans to the fringes of the game.

That middle-class makeover of English football in the 1990s has often led the media to romanticise football violence from afar. We've been subjected to the tedious memoirs of reformed hooligans, not to mention pretentious magazine photo essays that have glamorised the *ultras* in Italy and Spain and the *barras bravas* in Argentina.

How to maintain the passion of the game without it descending into the sort of criminality seen in Italy will be a challenge for new UEFA president Michel Platini. It has been refreshing to hear a football administrator refer to the game as a sport, not a business, and Platini's election was a boost for values that many football people have discarded in the rush for commercial gain over the past 15 years. Whether he can now deliver on his election promises is debatable.

During his campaign, Platini promised modest change to the Champions League. Yet there is no denying that the current competition format is hugely popular. It's almost impossible to predict a winner from the 16 teams in the second round – suffice to say that the teams that play the best football in the group stage in autumn rarely triumph in the Final in May.

That should give hope to Real Madrid and this month's cover star, Ruud Van Nistelrooy, who gives his first major English-language interview since moving to Madrid last summer.

Real Madrid remain an enigma. Whatever you think of David Beckham's image off the pitch, there is no disguising the fact that he has been shabbily treated by Real since the announcement of his summer move to America. Next month we'll analyse the impact Beckham is likely to have on the American sporting landscape in our preview of the Major League Soccer season. We'll also unveil an exciting new look for *World Soccer*. See you then.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

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BRAZIL: The 2005 champions began the new year with more desertions, financial problems and a widening rift with partners MSI. **Page 62**

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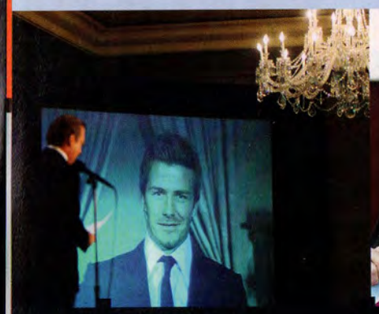


● 12/01/07

Screen time…David Beckham takes part via satellite in a media conference about his move to MLS

● 23/01/07

Hammer home…Australian defender Lucas Neill is welcomed to West Ham by manager Alan Curbishley

● 26/01/07

Big moment…Borussia Dortmund forward Alexander Frei celebrates scoring in the 3-2 league defeat of Bayern Munich

● 26/01/07

Vote for me…Michel Platini addresses UEFA congress in his successful bid to become president

● 27/01/07

Sponsor spot…Roman Abramovich takes in a game at the Channel One Cup, a tournament he partly funds

HEADLINERS

SEBASTIAN DEISLER

Troubled midfielder quits game at 27

THE FIVE OPERATIONS on his troublesome right knee, treatment for clinical depression and numerous spells on the sidelines finally took their toll. At the age of just 27, Bayern Munich and Germany attacking midfielder Sebastian Deisler is now an ex-professional, having decided that his body was not up to the rigours of the modern game.

Deisler, who began his career at Borussia Monchengladbach, then spent three seasons at Hertha Berlin before joining Bayern for £6.8million in 2002, told a press conference that his decision to quit "did not happen overnight. I've been mulling this over for some time. I'm happy with the decision I've come to. I don't have sufficient faith in my knee any more. Lately, it's been agony. I was no longer getting any pleasure from playing football. I've felt really handicapped. Perhaps I'll do some travelling and, of course, I'll spend time with my family. And then we'll see what happens."

Bayern and Germany, for whom he won 36 caps, will miss Deisler badly. He was arguably the most gifted player of his generation, a wonderful passer, a fine dribbler and an excellent taker of set-pieces. But it also has to be said that this reserved young man was never quite cut out to deal with all the trappings of fame. The tag "Basti Fantasti" made him wince, while it was obvious that he found media interviews sheer torture.

In the long run, the talk of him being the "German David Beckham" did him a big disservice. Here was a youngster who wanted to be a footballer, not a pop star.

Nick Bidwell

Calling time…Deisler announces his career is at an end

'I'm happy with my decision. I don't have sufficient faith in my knee any more. Lately, it's been agony. I was no longer getting pleasure from playing football'

MILAN BAROS

Czech striker re-united with coach Houllier at Lyon

GERARD HOULLIER MUST have mixed feelings about Milan Baros. He signed the Czech striker for Liverpool and has just signed him again, for Lyon, in one of the most intriguing deals of the January transfer window.

Baros, still only 25, scored on his home debut against Nice yet his arrival also coincided with a remarkable collapse in form and results for the five-times French champions.

Norway striker John Carew moved in exchange to Aston Villa, hoping to manage rather more than the 14 goals in 51 games that Baros accrued in his two seasons at Villa Park.

Baros had the chance to join Lyon 18 months ago, in the summer of 2005, when he left Liverpool after one season under the unimpressed Rafa Benitez, Houllier's successor. At that stage the Czech wanted to stay in the Premiership and prove a point. By the time Lyon came calling again, he had learned his lesson.

"I had my reasons for turning down Lyon in 2005," Baros says. "But this time the context was different and I believe I can make a mark with them.

"It never really worked for me at Villa. I had a string of injuries in 2006 which spilled over and affected me during the World Cup in Germany and at the start of this season."

Baros accepts that changing countries in mid-season can bring its own problems but he believes he knows what Houllier expects, and the initial language problems can be overcome with the help of English speakers such as Tiago, Sylvain Wiltord and Kim Kallstrom.

"This is a great opportunity for me to relaunch my career and prove I can do the business at the highest level in the game. Possibly even win the Champions League. Why not? I was in the Liverpool side that came back to beat Milan after being 3-0 down at half-time in Istanbul."

Keir Radnedge

Early strike…Baros celebrates scoring against Nice

Numbers game

9…

the number of goals scored in Spain's top division on the weekend of January 20 and 21, a record low.

500…

the number of appearances made for Juventus by Alessandro Del Piero, reaching the tally in the home game against Bari on January 20.

£127,000

the monthly salary of new South Africa coach Carlos Alberto Parreira.

£218.9m…

the amount paid for Liverpool by George Gillett and Tom Hicks, comprising £174.1m in shares and £44.8m in club debt.

£277,000…

the reported bonus picked up by United Arab Emirates players after they beat Oman in the Final of the Gulf Cup.

16…

the number of players who tested positive for banned substances during random testing by the Ukrainian Premier League last year.

● 04/02/07

Clincher…Melbourne Victory score against Adelaide United to reach the Australian A-League Grand Final

● 04/02/07

Bad run…Fred battles in vain against the Troyes defence as champions Lyon lose 1-0, their third defeat in four league games

● 05/02/07

Strip show…England players sport the team's new kit at the launch in Manchester

● 05/02/07

Tragic end…the funeral of Filippo Raciti, the policeman killed in Sicily's football riot, takes place in Catania

● 06/02/07

Double act…Liverpool's new owners, George Gillett and Tom Hicks, visit Anfield

far&wide

Treasured chest

ITALY'S STATE PRESIDENT Giorgio Napolitano provoked a lengthy burst of laughter when handing out medals to the members of the World Cup-winning squad. Just before the 81-year-old gave Inter defender Marco Materazzi his gong, he patted him on the chest, just at the point where Zinedine Zidane had infamously butted him during the Final.

A couple of weeks later, Materazzi's chest captured the headlines once again. Seven minutes into Inter's game at Sampdoria, host midfielder Gennaro Delvecchio responded to a goalmouth kerfuffle by "doing a Zidane" on big Marco. As with Zizou, Delvecchio was sent off…and Inter went on to win 2-0, a record-breaking 14th successive Serie A victory.

Pat marks the spot…Napolitano greets Materazzi

Watch your back

A Boca Juniors fan is rueing asking to have a tattoo of the club's logo on his back. Unbeknown to him, the tattooist was a fan of arch-rivals River Plate, and also the youngster naively declined to inspect his handiwork before leaving the parlour. It was only when he got home, lifted his shirt and showed off the tattoo to his parents that the full horror was revealed. There on his back was a colourful image of a penis. The young victim, who understandably prefers to remain nameless, is taking the tattooist to court.

Green light for red cards

Most coaches would be apoplectic about the refereeing if they had four players sent off in a game, but Osasuna boss Jose Angel Ziganda was quite the reverse. "The referee was phenomenal, and I don't say that with any irony," said Ziganda of Vicente Lizondo Cortes, who had dismissed Carlos Cuellar, Roberto Soldado, Ricardo and Raul Garcia in the last 15 minutes of the 1-0 defeat at Atletico Madrid. "It's the truth. Our players simply couldn't handle the prospect of losing the game and they got what they deserved."

Austere Auxerre

While players at most French top division clubs get through dozens of kits during a season, Auxerre, clearly on some kind of economy drive, expect each player to make one set last for the whole campaign. Defender Bacary Sagna finds the situation harsh, saying: "I don't know what the fans think of us when they ask for a shirt and we can't give it to them. Maybe they'd think differently if they knew we'd have to fork out around 60 euros from our own pockets to buy a replacement."

The Strongest take off

Bolivian club The Strongest got their season off to a flying start by beating Oriente Petrolero on penalties to win the Copa Aerosur and a prize of free air tickets for the rest of the year. Financial difficulties mean that most Bolivian teams cannot afford to fly to away games and are sometimes forced to undertake bus journeys of up to 15 hours over treacherous mountain roads. Oriente received a 50 per cent discount on their flights from the tournament's airline sponsor.

And another…Lizondo Cortes sends off Raul Gar

Fist first…Maradona gets up ahead of Shilton

Hand-wringing

THERE HAS BEEN plenty of squabbling between the Argentinians and the English about Diego Maradona's infamous "Hand of God" goal at the 1986 World Cup, and it seems the two match officials involved, Tunisian referee Ali Bennaceur and Bulgarian linesman Bogdan Dochev, won't let the matter rest either.

Even now, Bennaceur continues to blame Dochev for failing to signal to him that Maradona had fisted the ball past Peter Shilton. But the Bulgarian has hit back at his former colleague, saying: "He's an idiot. I always said he would be more suited to taking camels for a walk in the desert than refereeing a World Cup match. A European referee would never have awarded such a goal."

Javier Zanetti…
The Inter defender, surprisingly left out of Argentina's World Cup squad, was recalled for the friendly against France.

Ismail Matar…
United Arab Emirates' leading player was presented with two camels after scoring the winning goal against Saudi Arabia in the Gulf Cup semi-finals.

Tomas Rosicky…
The Arsenal midfielder was named Czech Footballer of the Year for the third time, ahead of Chelsea keeper Petr Cech, last year's winner.

Mine again…Rosicky

GOOD MONTH FOR…

BAD MONTH FOR…

All over…Nowotny

Hamburg…
The crossbars at the Bundesliga club's AOL Arena were found to be only 2.39m off the ground, a full 5cm lower than the prescribed level.

Jens Nowotny…
The former German international centre-back quit Dinamo Zagreb and announced his retirement because of a serious knee injury.

Marco Borriello…
The Milan striker faces a lengthy ban after a B sample confirmed the presence of two banned substances.

Seeing the bigger picture...Beckham gives his views to a media conference in Los Angeles via satellite from Madrid

Coming to America

David Beckham's transfer to Los Angeles Galaxy is a landmark deal for Major League Soccer

PAUL GARDNER in New York

THIS DEAL, this Beckham deal. This absurd, overpriced, overhyped, ridiculous deal to bring David and his family to America – or is it to Hollywood? What on earth do you make of it?

Heck, I can't even answer my own question. We've never seen a soccer deal like this before. I mean, bringing in a player and paying him as much as the rest of the team put together? What can Major League Soccer and Los Angeles Galaxy be thinking?

Aha! They're not thinking football, are they? This is not really a football deal at all, is it? Any doubts on that score were settled rather quickly by the announcement of the coming of Beckham, which did not involve either the player or Galaxy coach Frank Yallop.

Not to worry, everyone wanted to talk about money anyway, which made it all a bit awkward because Tim Leiweke, of the Anschutz Entertainment Group, which owns Galaxy, told us that it was AEG policy "not to get into financial details".

So we got snippets about a sudden increase in companies interested in shirt sponsorship, an extraordinary leap in season ticket sales – 1,000 sold in a few hours after the news got round – the distinct possibility that there might now be more women spectators at Galaxy games, the possibility of a tour of Asia, and lots of that sort of stuff. But not much about football.

The history of the deal itself doesn't exactly smack of football, either. That's because AEG is not a company devoted to football. It has wider interests – don't forget, the "E" in AEG stands for Entertainment. So we never got to watch two football clubs haggling over agents' demands. We never even had a word of debate about Beckham's footballing ability – that was a given from the start.

It all happened so quickly, in the space of about 10 days, at the beginning of January. According to Galaxy general manager Alexi Lalas: "Frank and I sat down last year and made a list of any number of players who could help us. Beckham was on that list, but it was really a sort of pie-in-the-sky thing at that point. He was in the 'unrealistic' category.

"Then, in the new year, there are suddenly all these incredible rumours floating around, and I'm getting a barrage of e-mails and frantic messaging and texting, and it was becoming clear that this was a definite possibility. On January 10 I was waiting for a phone call – *the* phone call – from my bosses. So I alerted my staff: 'Check your e-mails before you go to bed. If it's a "go", I'll let you know, then get ready for tomorrow.' It was a go, and when tomorrow came, all hell broke loose.

"From then on, we've all been caught up in this perfect storm that is David Beckham. We're just being swept along in an experience that none of us has ever had before. It's amazing to see his impact on all facets of the business."

Two-year relationship

The negotiations started on January 1 but were not exactly a bolt from the blue. Leiweke said: "We've had a two-year relationship with David Beckham because of our involvement with his academies in London and Los Angeles."

According to Ivan Gazidis, the deputy commissioner of MLS: "It was built on the trust that had been built up between Beckham's people and AEG." Beckham's people are an assortment of lawyers, personal managers and entities with names such as 19 Management and Creative Artists Agency. Gazidis was involved because it is MLS that signs the contract. Under its single-entity structure, the League contracts the players, not the individual clubs. That is true even for "designated players", a special category of elite players.

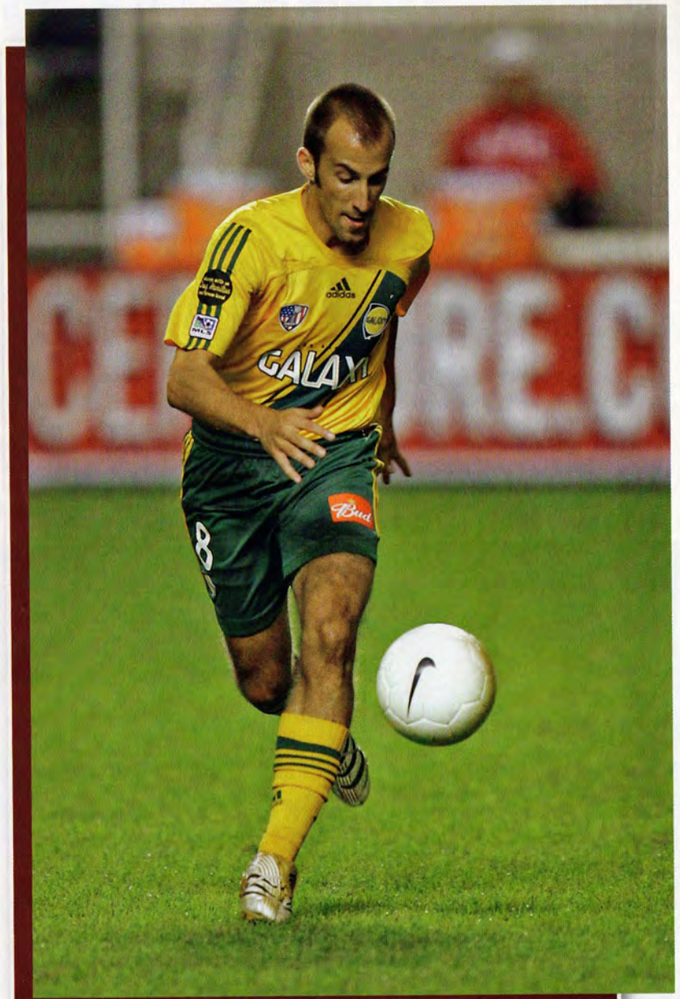
"The idea of the designated player was first discussed in 2005," Gazidis says, "but it was put on the back burner. It came up again last year, although it wasn't a desperation thing, there was no sense that we felt we had to make a move. But there was a general feeling that this was the time to introduce more flexibility into our system, all the owners were agreed on that. Certainly, the talk was of bringing in name players."

So the DP rule was adopted – each club was allowed one such player, whose annual salary could be whatever the club wished. Only the first £200,000, which is the maximum individual salary permitted under the League's cap, would be counted against the salary cap. The rule creating the DPs was immediately dubbed the "Beckham Rule", even though, at that time, the idea of him coming to MLS was a decidedly improbable dream.

Thus, of Beckham's widely-publicised annual salary, only £200,000 comes from MLS coffers. The rest will come from AEG and Beckham's existing sponsorship deals. It supposedly adds up to £125million for a five-year deal, or around £500,000 a week.

But it's not about the money. We have Leiweke's word for that – he says that Beckham had "better offers from other places". There has also been much insistence that Beckham sees himself on a mission to put football on the map in the USA – or "take soccer to a different level", as he himself put it.

Make no mistake, the potential for Beckham having a huge,



Warning note...Vagenas claims there is resentment over Beckham's megabucks deal

ONE OF THE players David Beckham will see when watching his DVDs of LA Galaxy games before leaving Madrid is Peter Vagenas, whom he could play alongside in midfield. Vagenas is, so far, the only guy to sound an off-key note about the signing. Talking about Beckham's monster pay deal, he said: "There's some resentment among the players. If people denied that, they would be lying."

'We've all been caught up in this perfect storm that is David Beckham. His impact on all facets of the business is amazing'

LA Galaxy general manager Alexi Lalas

positive influence on the sport is there. Not so much as a player – after all, how much difference can one player make to a whole league? – but because his signing marks the first time that MLS has shown itself ready to spend the big bucks necessary to attract top players. And, so goes the thinking, where Beckham has gone, others will follow. That's surely what MLS commissioner Don Garber believes. He told the initial press conference: "We hope to announce at least one more major signing in the next week or so."

Team strengths

The League certainly needs to upgrade the calibre of its play. Galaxy were a poor team last season, not even making the play-offs. Is Beckham aware of this? Lalas counters with a stout defence of his team's strengths, and reveals that Beckham has been studying them, saying: "He's asked for tapes and DVDs of Galaxy games."

The softly-spoken Yallop ("I've never shouted at a player in my life") has said that he will play Beckham in a central midfield role, and that the club have already received calls from top players in the English Premier League who are interested in joining Galaxy.

Evidently they are not the only ones. Lalas and his staff had been working on staging an open trial in the Los Angeles area. The Beckham announcement opened the floodgates, and applications to take part flowed in from all over the world. The club had to call a halt to online applications. The event is now "limited" to between 600 and 700 players. Each will be paying £65 to take part, so it's pretty good business for Galaxy – even though there's a lurking suspicion that hidden among the hopefuls there may be spies from the English tabloids. The tabloid guys have already introduced an angle that's never featured in MLS before – they've been collecting photographs of the players' wives.

While we wait for Beckham the player, Beckham the idol is gathering pace. His friendship with Tom Cruise is well documented, he's got himself endorsed by Sylvester Stallone – "He'll be received as a superstar, he has the looks, the whole thing" – and he's now been snapped up by Disney Studios for a promotional campaign. There he is, astride a superb white horse, fighting an evil fire-breathing dragon. He's the Prince from *Sleeping Beauty*. The symbolism seems a bit too corny – will Prince David's kiss awaken American soccer?

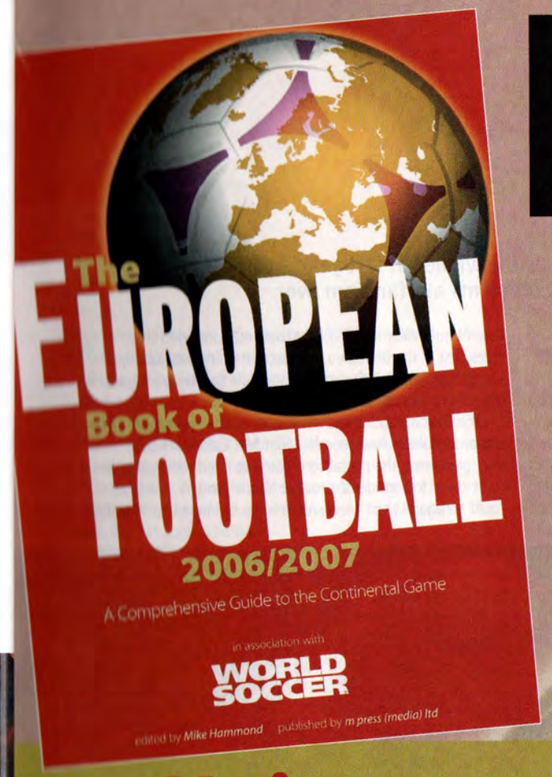
Back to reality. With Beckham not likely to arrive until the summer, the second half of the MLS season has now become the attractive part of the schedule but something of a nightmare for the guys at MLS HQ who draw up the fixture list. There are 13 teams in MLS, and 12 of them are now demanding that they get a home game against Galaxy after the Coming of David Beckham.

Hollywood hype...Beckham portrayed in a Disney Studios promotion as the Prince from *Sleeping Beauty* – ready to wake up American soccer?

BUCKS FOR BECKS

How the reported £125million five-year deal breaks down

Annual salary (AEG and MLS)	£5m
Endorsement deals (Adidas, Gillette, Pepsi)	£12.5m
Share of Galaxy merchandising and profits (from AEG)	£7.5m
TOTAL	£25m a year



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Up the poll

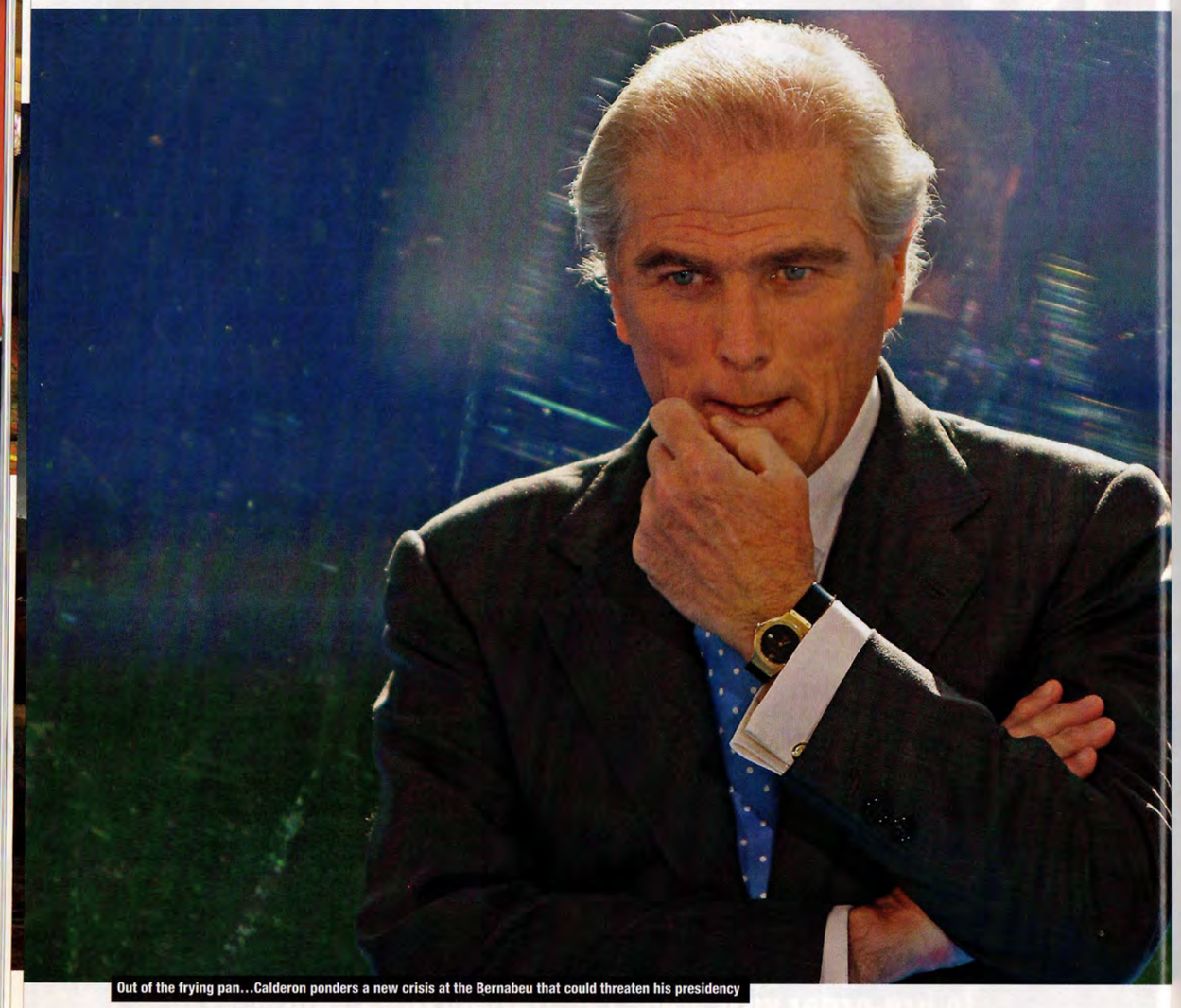
Ramon Calderon has finally been confirmed as the winner of last year's controversial presidential election at Real Madrid, but his problems are far from over

SID LOWE
in Madrid

THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES no longer hangs over Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon, but shaking off the crisis at his club is another matter entirely. No sooner had the courts ruled on last summer's controversial election, thus confirming him in his position, than Madrid lost another match and he was plunged into yet more turmoil.

Calderon, a lawyer and former director of the capital's Las Ventas bullring, was elected only narrowly last July, polling 8,344 votes against 8,098 for Juan Palacios and 6,072 for Juan Miguel Villar Mir. Crucially, that result included only votes cast at the Bernabeu after a court ruling temporarily suspended the 10,500-strong postal vote following allegations of serious irregularities.

The Spanish media had reported that a large number of the embargoed votes had been for Villar Mir. Calderon's belief was that, presuming the postal vote ban was lifted when a Madrid court came to consider the matter in late January, a recount could go against him. However, another scenario was that the judge might lift the embargo but, regardless of the result, order the whole election to be re-run anyway.



Out of the frying pan...Calderon ponders a new crisis at the Bernabeu that could threaten his presidency

It was the provisional nature of Calderon's position that had made him so edgy. It had put him in a permanent state of campaigning, talking constantly and for ever putting his foot in his mouth, travelling the country visiting supporters' clubs, trying to drum up a power base and taking populist but erroneous decisions. All in a desperate bid to project the image of a winner, an aura of being in control – but the more he tried to project that image, the less control he had.

But then a miracle happened. Milagros Aparicio, the judge who heard the case, ruled that the suspension of the postal votes would be made permanent, insisting that insufficient care had been taken to guarantee their authenticity. They would, therefore, all be binned. On February 1, 216 days after first taking over, and having spent £69million on eight players, Calderon was officially president. "Maybe now I can get on with the job," he said.

Levante disaster

If only it was that simple. Three days later, Real Madrid faced Levante. It should have been a celebration – it was Madrid's 1,000th league game at the Santiago Bernabeu and representatives from more than 1,800 supporters clubs from around the world were in the stadium. Instead, it was a disaster.

Madrid lost 1-0 to a side that had never beaten them before. The fans reacted by waving the white hankies, whistling, booing and chanting for Calderon and coach Fabio Capello to resign.

They had seen enough. Their president had dug himself hole after hole – such as singularly failing to deliver on his promise, made during his election campaign, to sign Kaka, among others – while the team once again appeared to be heading for a trophyless season. Worse still, Madrid were being led by a coach who was boring. They had dropped more points than in any of the past 16 seasons at the equivalent stage (21 games) and with the third lowest goals tally in their history.

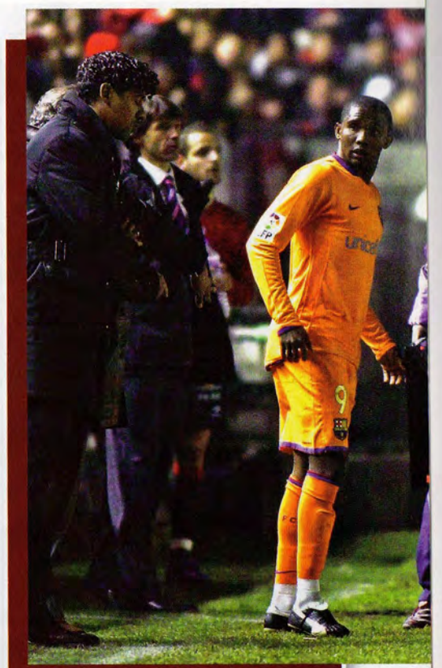
The winter arrival of Brazilian Marcelo, who immediately suffered an injury, and Argentinians Fernando Gago and Gonzalo Higuain had done little to turn things round. Madrid had played seven times since acquiring the trio and won just twice, both of them rather fortunate 1-0s. Nor, even more tellingly, had the team improved with Capello's much-trumpeted revolution. The mid-season turn to youth, which brought with it the ostracism of David Beckham and the departure of Ronaldo to Milan, had not brought an upturn in form.

Instead, it had turned the fans even further against Capello and Calderon. The president's handling of Beckham's summer move to Major League Soccer was so ham-fisted and crass that it completely undermined his credibility. Meanwhile, Madrid's failure to buy a replacement for Ronaldo was unfathomable, given their goalscoring problems.

Calderon was not so much disappointed at losing Beckham as furious to have been made to look foolish. Time and time again he announced that Beckham was on the point of signing a deal to keep him at Madrid for the rest of his career, only for the Englishman, who had been equally insistent that he would stay, to leave for the United States.

Sporting director Predrag Mijatovic claimed the club felt "betrayed". Capello insisted that, having signed for Los Angeles Galaxy, Beckham did not have his mind on Madrid. And Calderon reacted by accusing the former England captain of being "a half-baked actor" that "no one wanted". Beckham responded by standing up in front of his team-mates to tell president and sporting director, to their faces, that they had lost his respect for ever.

For the fans, meanwhile, there was the sight of Beckham up in his private box, booted out by Capello, while down on the pitch the team underperformed again. The fans simply couldn't understand it. Madrid were facing elimination from the Copa del Rey on away goals against Real Betis at the Bernabeu when they won a late free-kick. Fans motioned to Beckham to come down from his box and take it, but he could only shrug apologetically as the ball sailed into the stands.



Ready...Eto'o prepares for his late show

WHILE REAL MADRID'S problems mounted, Barcelona's Samuel Eto'o made a surprise return from his long injury lay-off, playing the last few minutes of a 0-0 draw at Osasuna on February 4. "I knew I was only going to get five minutes," said Eto'o, who had scored four goals in as many league games before damaging knee ligaments last September.

Beckham out

Since then, Capello has continued to leave Beckham out of his squad. Against Levante, he called on a midfielder from the B team just hours before kick-off, obliging him to catch a flight back to Madrid. The coach also gave a place to a converted right-back who has not played a competitive game in over two years. Anyone but Beckham.

Capello has become increasingly irritated at constant questions about Beckham's absence. Asked about the wasted free-kick in the Cup, he snapped: "Beckham has scored two or three goals from free-kicks and he has taken loads of them." Of Beckham's absence while the team continues to underperform, he spat: "He's been here for three years and as far as I'm aware hasn't won anything."

After a board meeting on February 5, Calderon gave Capello a vote of confidence but privately he has warned the Italian results must improve. If things do not get better, and fast, Beckham's last six months at Madrid will be equally frustrating for the fans. As for Calderon, his new-found stability may prove a fleeting luxury.

'David Beckham has been at Real Madrid for three years and as far as I am aware he hasn't won anything'

Fabio Capello tetchily answers another query about why he is not playing the Englishman

Paris match?

Paul Le Guen, newly appointed by struggling PSG, is no troubleshooting coach, but he brings with him the spirit of his highly successful years as club captain

HOWARD JOHNSON in Paris

PAUL LE GUEN'S return to France to take up the reins at Paris Saint-Germain after his Rangers nightmare has not been an instant, runaway success. But the signs that there could be an upturn in fortunes are already there.

PSG recorded two wins, two draws and a defeat in the first five games since the self-contained Breton, a former PSG captain, replaced the hapless Guy Lacombe. It was not exactly jaw-dropping form, but the most important statistic may well be that they conceded only one goal in that run – Lille's winner in a league game on January 24. The team also showed something resembling a backbone, hardly a feature as Lacombe's tenure limped to an ignominious end.

"We've got to learn to win again, and the performances have been far from perfect," Le Guen said, while also pronouncing himself satisfied with his team's work ethic in those early days.

As any manager knows, winning starts at the back. Interestingly, though, Le Guen has not tinkered with his defensive personnel, sticking with a back four of Bernard Mendy, David Rozehnal, Mario Yepes and Sylvain Armand in front of keeper Mickael Landreau. But he has fiddled with his midfield quite a bit in an effort to give more protection to his defence and, by definition, more confidence to the team overall.

"It's what we've needed," said midfielder Edouard Cisse. "Paul's looked at our organisation and tried to get rid of any doubts. And we've been racked by them of late."

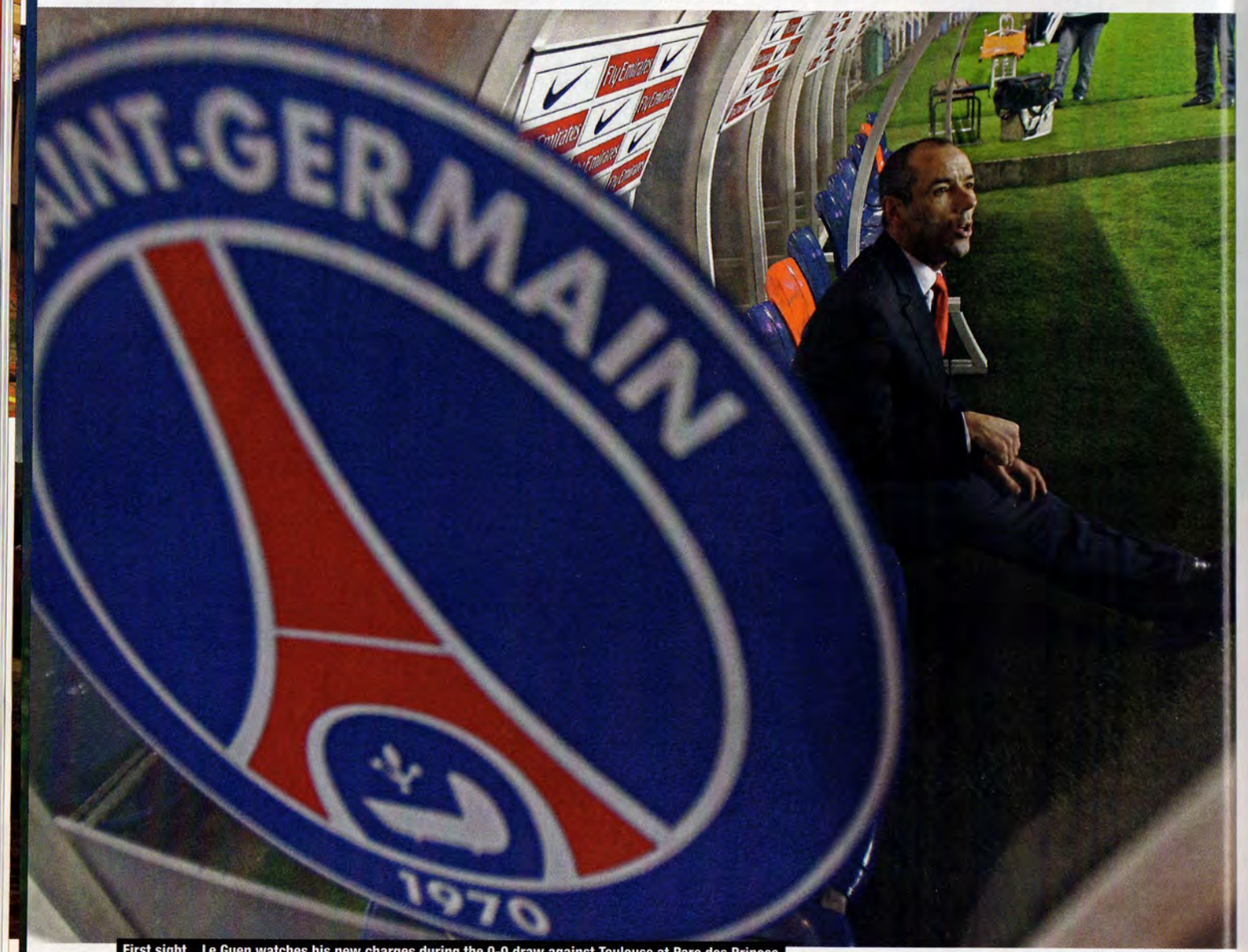
For a long time, PSG have started campaigns full of bluster and bravado, only to fall apart at the slightest sign of trouble. This time has been worse than most, with the club teetering just above the relegation zone when Le Guen took over. And the 42-year-old is hardly renowned for his troubleshooting abilities nor for building successful teams.

Le Guen had an unblemished spell in charge of Lyon, winning three consecutive league titles between 2003 and 2005. But the foundations for success had already been laid by Jacques Santini, who took Lyon to their first league title in 2002.

While there are particular stresses associated with maintaining success, building it in the first place is generally more difficult. When Le Guen has been challenged to take a misfiring team and build a smooth operator, he has not looked nearly so comfortable.

The first time was at Rennes, his first coaching appointment. In his second season there, 1999-2000, Le Guen endured a nailbiting fight against relegation and apparently was a whisker away from getting the sack.

"I'm not a firefighter," he willingly admitted in his first press conference back in Paris. But that does lead you to question why he agreed to take charge of Rangers, where the smell of burning tinder is never too far away whenever Celtic are ruling the roost.



First sight...Le Guen watches his new charges during the 0-0 draw against Toulouse at Parc des Princes

Golden era

So, in fact, it is not his managerial experience that gives him a fighting chance of improving PSG's fortunes, rather that he brings with him the spirit of his highly successful years as club captain. Le Guen first pulled on his boots for PSG in 1991 after signing from Nantes. It had been five long years since the club won the championship, their last success in the Cup even further back, in 1983. But with the combative defensive midfielder on board, PSG entered the only golden era of their history.

Le Guen led them to the Cup in 1993, a league title in 1994, a League Cup and French Cup double in 1995, the Cup-winners Cup in 1996 and a second League Cup and French Cup double in his last year at the club, 1998. Seven trophies in seven magnificent years.

"Paul impressed me from the off with his dedication and work ethic," says Michel Denisot, PSG's president during that era. "He was the embodiment of PSG's consistency at that time. I always knew he'd go back to the club, and the fact that he's done it now when things are difficult shows just how much affection he has for the place."

The feeling is mutual. When Le Guen took charge of his first match, a league game at home to Toulouse on January 17, even the notoriously chippy PSG supporters were in a good mood. Banners said: "Welcome home, Le Guen" and "Paul, hi from the Boulogne Boys" (Boulogne is the name of a stand at the Parc des Princes). Even a dull-as-ditchwater 0-0 draw played out in lashing wind and rain did not seem to dampen spirits – because Le Guen fits the bill of what Paris thinks it is entitled to in a manager, in that he is suave, sophisticated and urbane. But above all he is one of them – and about as far removed from that southern bumpkin Lacombe and his farmer's moustache as you can get.

Of course, everyone in the capital is conveniently ignoring the fact that Le Guen was an abject failure in his seven months in Glasgow. The Scottish League has been dismissed here as inconsequential and the Rangers' dressing room culture as lax and not befitting of a professional outfit. In other words, Le Guen was doing the honourable thing in walking away once he realised the club did not share his values. There may be some merit in the argument. Certainly France does not have the same drinking culture as Scotland. But the French mentality brings problems of its own, particularly when it comes to running a harmonious ship.

Here, players are for ever washing dirty laundry in public and voicing personal grievances through the media. Lacombe tried a strongarm approach, similar to Le Guen's with captain Barry Ferguson at Rangers, by getting rid of the difficult Vikash Dhorasoo. A fat lot of good it did him in the end. And let us not forget that Le Guen was at Lyon at a time when things were ever so calm, because players like winning and they like success.

Statues...Lyon's Cris (left) battles with Samir Nasri during the French Cup defeat at Marseille

LYON, runaway league leaders and champions for the past five seasons, have been brought down to earth in the past few weeks, losing to Toulouse (2-0), Bordeaux (2-1) and Troyes (1-0), and managing only a 1-1 draw at home to Nice. They also lost 2-1 at Marseille in the last 16 of the French Cup after leading with three minutes to go. A blip for Gerard Houllier's men, perhaps, but a worrying one.

Player challenge

The challenge facing Le Guen is to heal rifts and get the best from a number of players, including Pierre-Alain Frau, Jerome Rothen, Bonaventure Kalou and David Hellebuyck, who have shown they are top-quality performers at other clubs but have yet to produce the goods in Paris.

Still, no one can say Le Guen has no balls. His first signing – on a three-and-a-half-year contract, no less – was controversial: Marseille's Peguy Luyindula, one of Ligue 1's most frustratingly inconsistent strikers. But Le Guen knows him well from their days at Lyon and obviously has confidence that Luyindula will flourish in the Parisian pressure cooker, just as Le Guen did as a player.

The million dollar question, of course, is whether the new manager can bring back the glory days to Paris, this time from the side of the pitch.

'The fact Paul has gone back now when things are difficult shows how much affection he has for the place'

Former PSG president Michel Denisot

Back in the goldfish bowl...Hitzfeld arrives in the Bayern dugout at Nurnberg

Hitzfeld re-hired

Bayern turn to their former boss as Magath pays the price for poor results

NICK BIDWELL in Munich

IN THE BUNDESLIGA, coaches parachuted into struggling clubs are often referred to as "firemen". Unfortunately for Bayern Munich, the flames licking around their domestic title hopes were burning even more intensely in the aftermath of the sacking of Felix Magath and the reappointment of Ottmar Hitzfeld, the man Magath succeeded in July 2004.

Hitzfeld, his usual dapper, highly-confident self, was predictably in "crisis, what crisis?" mode at his first press conference, insisting that even though Bayern were eight points behind joint leaders Werder Bremen and Schalke they could still hold on to their crown. "I'm convinced the squad is strong enough to be German champions again," said Hitzfeld, who is under contract until the end of the season. "Schalke and Bremen will not win all their games from now until the end of the season. With three points for a win a lot can happen very quickly indeed."

A little more than 24 hours later, those words had been well and truly undermined by Bayern's 3-0 thrashing at regional rivals Nurnberg. The enterprising, well-organised hosts were a credit to their canny Dutch coach, Hans Meyer. But their task was made so much easier by the woeful Bayern performance, the sort of away-day no-show of which they have made a habit this term.

Their failings were exposed for all to see: the absence of fight and togetherness, the poor communication at the back, a midfield devoid of ideas and changes of tempo, and a decidedly out-of-form front line, with Claudio Pizarro and Roy Makaay apparently just going through the motions. Even when Hitzfeld augmented his attack by introducing Lukas Podolski in the second half, Bayern remained lamentably toothless.

As the euphoric Nurnberg fans made their way back into town to toast their first win against Bayern since 1999, Hitzfeld gave a brutally honest assessment. "I'm naturally very disappointed," he said. "There's still too much sand in the works. We tried hard but were often a step too late in the crucial areas. There's also too much indiscipline in defence; [centre-back] Lucio was wandering too much. I knew my task would be difficult. Now I can see that I have even more work in front of me." In other words, forget the title, the best we can hope for is to qualify for the Champions League via a second or third-place finish.

Evicted from the house...Doll leaves Hamburg

THE LAST WEEK in January was bad for two other Bundesliga coaches. After just one win in 19 games, Hamburg finally called time on Thomas Doll, while a dozen matches without a win spelled the end for Monchengladbach's Jupp Heynckes, who had recently taken charge of his 500th Bundesliga match. Felix Magath turned down the chance to jump straight back into the coaching saddle at Hamburg, leaving the way clear for ex-Schalke and Hertha boss Huub Stevens to move in.

'There's still too much sand in the works...now I can see I have even more work in front of me'

Ottmar Hitzfeld appreciates the size of his task to rejuvenate Bayern

Media confidence

Despite the fiasco at Nurnberg, the German media generally remain confident of Hitzfeld's capacity to spark a revival in the League and lead Bayern to victory in their Champions League tie against Real Madrid. It is a natural reaction to look at what "The General" achieved in his first spell at the club, between 1998 and 2004 – four Bundesliga titles, two Cups and the 2001 Champions League and World Club Cup – and conclude it is a job tailor-made for him.

How times change. Towards the end of the 2003-04 campaign, Hitzfeld was constantly under attack in the press for allowing the team to grow complacent as well as physically stale. And the Bayern board could not wait to put him out to pasture, lining up hard taskmaster Magath to knock the recalcitrant superstars back into shape. Two and a half years on, the roles have been reversed.

Could it be that Magath's big stick was only ever going to be effective for a limited period? For the first two seasons of his reign, the boot camp methods and relentless pursuit of collective and individual discipline had the desired effect, forging a close-knit unit that might not have entertained but was a results machine, good enough to clinch back-to-back league and cup doubles.

But familiarity erodes the fear factor and this term it was apparent that the players were no longer responding to tough love. A sure sign of Magath's dwindling authority came during the winter break training camp in Dubai. In previous years he would have worked his charges into the ground with little match play to lighten the load. This time, though, a ball was present in all the exercises.

If Magath was trying to curry favour with a group of players he sensed were no longer receptive to his message, it did not work. For all his claims that the second half of the season would be a new beginning, a time for unity of purpose, 2007 only brought more disappointment, a 3-2 defeat at Borussia Dortmund after leading 2-1 at half-time and a soporific goalless draw at home to Bochum.

The end was nigh. With Magath's surreal description of the Bochum game as "a step forward" ringing in their ears, the Bayern board met to consider their next course of action. By the following morning Magath was gone, just six months after extending his contract for another year until 2008, and Hitzfeld summoned from his Swiss retreat.

Bayern are not in the habit of changing coaches mid-season; the only previous occasion was when Otto Rehhagel was fired in spring 1996 in favour of caretaker deluxe Franz Beckenbauer, who promptly steered them to win the UEFA Cup. "Those of us responsible for the club have a duty to take note of recent developments and react to them," explained chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. "The concern that we wouldn't qualify for the Champions League led to this decision."

Borrowed time

In truth, Magath had been living on borrowed time for nearly a year. Bayern's heavy loss to Milan in the first knockout round of last term's Champions League stripped him of much credibility in the eyes of his employers. The axe blade was further sharpened by Rummenigge's criticism of the team's pedestrian style of football and a series of disastrous displays in 2006-07, the most humbling being away defeats in the League at Werder, Arminia Bielefeld and Wolfsburg, plus a 4-2 loss in the Cup to Alemannia Aachen.

Ultimately, Magath's luck ran out, particularly in terms of midfield personnel. Bayern's management will deny it until they are blue in the face but they made a crucial error in not adequately replacing Michael Ballack and Ze Roberto following their moves to Chelsea and Santos last summer. The Bavarians have struggled in this area ever since, and the repeated injuries and eventual retirement of the talented but fragile Sebastian Deisler compounded the problem.

Magath is not incompetent. Any coach able to win back-to-back doubles has qualities aplenty. However, over a long period of time, his dogmatic approach grated rather than galvanised and he was too distant from his players to truly inspire. With Magath one often had the feeling that he had no time for the modern-day player, that he held their celebrity lifestyle, advertising campaigns, choreographed goal celebrations and on-pitch fashion statements in contempt. He feared they put the trappings of fame before their craft – and he might be right.

Fighting spirit

The national team have battled to become a real continental force and there have been positive developments on the club scene. But the domestic game is currently riven by a political dispute

TIM VICKERY in Asuncion

IT GOES WITHOUT saying that Brazil and Argentina are South America's top two footballing nations. More surprising is the fact that Paraguay now have as good a claim as anyone to be considered number three.

Paraguay are the only South American country apart from the Big Two to have qualified for the last three World Cups, in which they were never less than competitive. They were Olympic silver medallists in 2004, reached the semi-finals of the 2001 World Youth Cup and can boast a club, Olimpia, whose number of Libertadores Cup titles (three) is bettered by only three sides – Argentina's Independiente and Boca Juniors, and Penarol of Uruguay.

That Paraguay could even be in contention as the continent's third force is remarkable. First, there is the size of its population, 6.2 million, which is less than half that of both Ecuador and Chile. Colombia and Peru have 45.6 and 28 million respectively.

Then there is the state of the country. Desperately underdeveloped, Paraguay has never recovered from the near annihilation it suffered in a foolhardy war against Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay in the 1860s. Nowadays, it has a permanent drowsy Sunday feel, with mangy dogs snoozing on broken paving stones and emaciated horses and ramshackle carts cluttering up streets in the centre of the capital, Asuncion.

But on the football field Paraguay have always punched above their weight. For a start they have their legendary fighting spirit, which made their countrymen such feared opponents in wartime. In general, Paraguayans are a serene and docile people. Football, though, brings out the warrior in them. Famously stoical, they have a natural ability to knit together and form teams greater than the sum of their parts. This cohesiveness is no doubt helped by the fact that Paraguay, landlocked and with an inhospitable climate, had its social structures less damaged by the process of colonisation than other South American countries. Also, in addition to Spanish, the people still proudly speak the indigenous language, Guarani.

These factors have all contributed to the rise of Paraguayan football, but a lot of the credit goes to an improvement in the technical side of the game.

Success story...Libertad, the 2006 Paraguayan champions, have ended the domestic dominance of Cerro Porteno and Olimpia

Youth development

One reason for this has been the increased focus on youth development. FA president Oscar Harrison says: "Before, our first official category was for 14-year-olds. We changed that to 10, and we're setting up championships in the Under-8 and Under-9 age groups." At national team level, the youngest side is the Under-12s, and youth teams are frequently sent abroad to pick up experience.

Players are funnelled through the process. For example, talented midfielder Edgar Barreto came through the ranks all the way to the World Cup squad. And after years of having to hire training facilities, the national team now have a home of their own. Financed by the FIFA Goal project, Paraguay opened their own complex at Ypane on the outskirts of Asuncion in 2003.

The domestic league has benefited from a change forced through by Harrison when he took over in the mid-1990s – reducing the size of the top flight. "We had 16 teams in our first division, so our principal clubs had lots of matches against opponents who weren't up to competing with them," he says.

Now there are only 12 teams (there were as few as 10 at one stage), and with two tournaments a year, it means the big clubs are guaranteed to meet each other four times. The two winners meet at the end of the year to determine the overall champions.

Other significant developments have made the domestic league more competitive. First, a process of decentralisation has taken place. For decades, all the first division clubs were based in Asuncion or neighbouring towns such as Luque (Sportivo Luqueno), Itaugua (12 de Octubre) and Villa Hayes (Presidente Hayes). Then in 1999 Paraguay staged the Copa America for the first time and used the event to invest in stadiums outside the capital, in the border cities of Ciudad del Este and Pedro Juan Caballero, both of which now have first division clubs, 3 de Febrero and 2 de Mayo respectively.

Meanwhile, temperatures have risen back in the capital. Traditionally, Asuncion pair Cerro Porteno and Olimpia have dominated Paraguayan football. The big two won 12 of the 24 titles of the amateur era (the first national championship was in 1906). Since the introduction of professionalism in 1935 they have claimed 53 out of 72. In the decade between 1992 and 2001, they divided all the spoils.

Then came the rise of Libertad, a traditional Asuncion club but with only a handful of titles to their name and who had been relegated as recently as 1998. Then they changed their approach. They are now run by a private company, rather than following the South American norm of belonging to their members, and the new business-minded model is paying off. Libertad have won three of the last five titles, and are the current champions. Also, after a series of frustrations they have now made an impression on the continental stage, playing some excellent football and eliminating Argentina's River Plate on the way to the semi-finals of last year's Libertadores Cup. Libertad's consistent success means that talk of the big two has become outdated. Libertad may not have the same supporter base as Cerro or Olimpia, but they now belong to an elite of three.

Libertad are also making waves in the administration of the game, with president Horacio Cartes a key figure in a fight splitting domestic football down the middle.

The origins can be traced back to the fall-out from last year's World Cup, where Paraguay were knocked out in the group stage despite having their sights set on the quarter-finals at least. The failure weakened Harrison's position, and his deputy, Juan Angel Napout, decided to challenge him for the leadership, with Cartes orchestrating the campaign.

Olympics bound...Argentina's Acosta

BRAZIL WON the Under-20 Championship in Paraguay, finishing two points ahead of Argentina in the final stage group. Those two countries take South America's places at the 2008 Olympics and also qualify for this year's World Youth Cup. Uruguay and Chile will also go to the latter event after finishing third and fourth.

Damaging blow

The meeting at which the next FA president was to be chosen should have taken place in early January. But Harrison stalled, almost certainly in the hope that Paraguay, the hosts, would come to his rescue and do well in the South American Under-20 Championship. They didn't, finishing only fifth to miss out on this year's World Youth Cup and the Beijing Olympics, a further damaging blow to the president.

Half the first division clubs (Cerro Porteno, Olimpia, Libertad, Guarani, Sol de America and 3 de Febrero) are with Napout. They refuse to start the championship until the election, now scheduled for March 6, has taken place, and are meanwhile setting up a parallel competition.

The outcome of the election will also determine who becomes national coach. Uruguayan Anibal Ruiz resigned after the World Cup, with Raul Amarilla taking the reins only on a temporary basis. Napout will install Gerardo Martino, the Argentinian who did such impressive work with Libertad. Harrison's options seem to be Paulo Cesar Carpeggiani, the Brazilian who took Paraguay to the 1998 World Cup, or former Argentina goalkeeper Nery Pumpido, who won the Libertadores with Olimpia in 2002.

While the row rumbles on, FIFA international dates are not being used and Paraguay are falling behind in terms of preparation for the Copa America in June and July and the start of the World Cup qualifiers later in the year. But that is yet another obstacle that Paraguay's players will have to overcome.

'Half the first division clubs refuse to start the championship until the presidential election has taken place'

CLUB GUIDE

2 LIBERTAD
Had won only eight titles – the last in 1976 – until Horacio Cartes took over in 2000. His cash and business-minded approach have given the club an impressive structure, and they have won three titles in the past five years. Formed in 1905.

3 OLIMPIA
The country's oldest club, co-founded in 1902 by Dutchman William Paats, who introduced football to Paraguay. Also the most successful club, with 38 league titles and three Libertadores Cups. Have struggled since their last Libertadores triumph, in 2002.

4 NACIONAL
Traditional Asuncion club, founded in 1904, from the working-class neighbourhood of Obrero. Best known for producing Arsenio Erico, probably Paraguay's greatest player, and their stadium bears his name. Won the last of their six titles in 1946.

5 GUARANI
Paraguay's second oldest club, having been founded in 1903, and were an early force. Have recently suffered from poor administration and the last of their nine domestic titles came in 1984. Reached the Libertadores semi-finals in 1966.

6 TACUARY
Tiny Asuncion club who have been taken from amateur status to the Libertadores Cup by president Francisco Ocampo. Have a small support base, especially since their stadium was moved from the wealthy Jara area to Zeballos Cue on the city outskirts.

1 CERRO PORTENO
Paraguay's most popular team, having gained a mass following after winning the championship in 1913, the year after their formation. They have won 27 domestic titles in all, but no international trophies – a very sore point.

7 SOL DE AMERICA
Small, newly-promoted club from Asuncion's Obrero district. Once coached by Ferenc Puskas, who also coached Cerro Porteno. Caused upsets when winning the title in 1986 and 1991, then moved their stadium to Villa Elisa on the city outskirts and have won nothing since.

12 3 DE FEBRERO
From Paraguay's second city, the chaotic Ciudad del Este. Founded in 1970, 3 de Febrero came up through the ranks and reached the first division in 2005. One to watch.

11 2 DE MAYO
Pedro Juan Caballero-based club who won the second division in 2005 and now face their second year in the top flight. Just like Sportivo Luqueno and 3 de Febrero, they benefited from stadium investment for the 1999 Copa America.

10 12 DE OCTUBRE
Based in Itaugua, some 20 miles from Asuncion, their growth was hampered by the existence of a number of local rivals. But the club now appear to have won the battle for supremacy in the town, even qualifying for the Libertadores.

9 SPORTIVO LUQUENO
The Luque-based club should have far more than two titles (1951 and 1953) to their name; the support base is strong and they have a reasonable stadium. But Sportivo are plagued by poor management and political in-fighting.

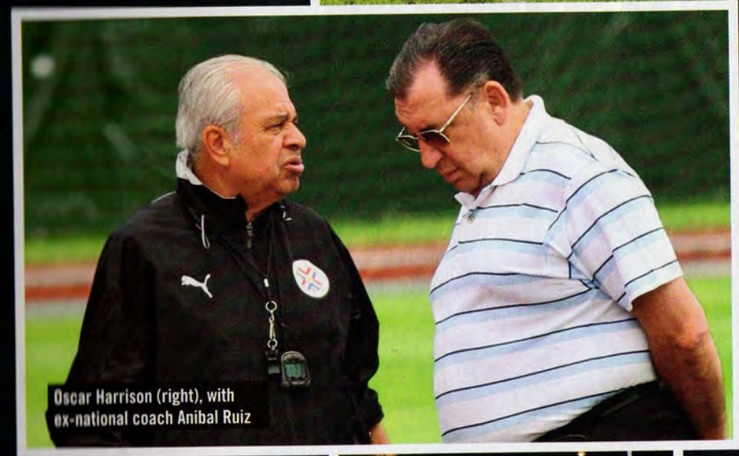
8 SPORTIVO TRINIDENSE
Another newly-promoted, small Asuncion club, they are based in the poor Santisima Trinidad area near the botanical gardens.

WHO'S WHO

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS IN PARAGUAYAN SOCCER

● **NICOLAS LEOZ** – president of CONMEBOL, the South American confederation, since 1986. In his quiet, conciliatory way, he has been a highly effective politician, presiding over a significant growth in the continent's football in often difficult circumstances. The Libertadores Cup and World Cup qualifying campaign have both been expanded, and Leoz also managed to reactivate the Copa America and take it to all the continent's countries. Paraguay's hosting of the 1999 tournament was important for the development of the domestic game, and Leoz has also ensured that CONMEBOL's permanent home is in Paraguay, close to the international airport in Luque.

Nicolas Leoz


Oscar Harrison (right), with ex-national coach Anibal Ruiz

● **OSCAR HARRISON** – businessman with a background in the pharmaceutical industry who has been president of the Paraguayan FA since December 1994. Has enjoyed some success, but is currently fighting for his position after last year's World Cup failure. Critics say he treats football as his personal fiefdom and that his methods are outdated.

● **JUAN ANGEL NAPOUT** – Harrison's long-time vice-president who, in the fall-out from Germany 2006, surprisingly broke with his mentor and launched an aggressive challenge for the top job using the slogan "football is for everyone". Perhaps Harrison, with an eye on the position of Leoz, had promised to stand aside. Perhaps Napout just got tired of waiting.

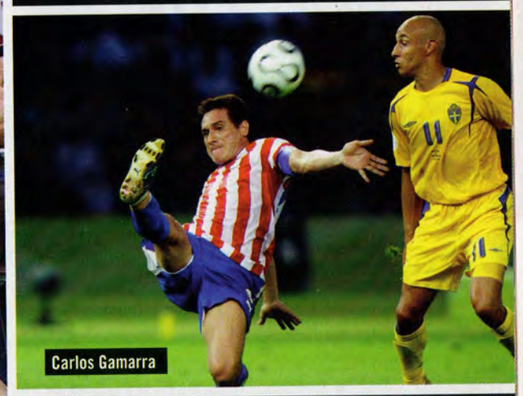
Jose Luis Chilavert

● **HORACIO CARTES** – wealthy businessman from the tobacco industry who has lit a fire in Paraguayan football. As president of Libertad, his resources and intelligence have helped the club break the monopoly of the big two. Was briefly co-ordinator of the national team, but then became a ferocious opponent of Harrison and the driving force behind the campaign of Napout.

● **FRANCISCO OCAMPO** – holds the curious double function of club president and FIFA agent. His input has taken tiny Tacuary all the way to the Libertadores. Ocampo, who has Italian connections, owns the club's stadium and named it after former Italy forward Roberto Bettega. However, those European connections make him a controversial figure in Paraguayan football, with other clubs accusing him of helping European teams poach their players.

● **JOSE LUIS CHILAVERT** – a huge figure as a goalscoring goalkeeper and still a large presence in retirement. Has talked about running for president of both Paraguay and its FA, but then again he says a lot of things, very few of them complimentary. His favourite targets are Harrison and Gamarra.

● **CARLOS GAMARRA** – the immaculate centre-back is a veteran of three World Cups and Paraguay's most capped player. Recently coaxed out of retirement by former international team-mate Jose Cardozo, who is coach of Olimpia. This will add spice to the 2007 season since Gamarra was a symbol of Cerro Porteno.


Carlos Gamarra

Up against it

Real Madrid's sale of Ronaldo to Milan has increased the goalscoring burden on Ruud Van Nistelrooy, who also has failed to win over the fans. Sid Lowe examines the Dutchman's predicament, while Gordon McKenna speaks to the man himself

'The Madrid fans view Van Nistelrooy as a good, honest professional but somehow a bit, well, dull'

"MICHAEL OWEN? He's a bit vulgar for a galactico. All he does is score goals." It sounded like a joke but it was not. The man who said it was the respected editor of one of Spain's best-selling newspapers – and, although rather harsh, his words merely reflected the opinion of countless Real Madrid fans.

Owen finished his one and only season in Spain – 2004-05 – with the best goals-per-game ratio in La Liga, but somehow, in a country and at a club that value the aesthetic as highly as the effective, it was never enough. He rarely took anyone on, he rarely did anything fancy, he just stuck the ball in the net. He was admired, but never really loved. He was never a star.

Now Ruud Van Nistelrooy knows exactly how he feels. The reception afforded to the Dutchman since his arrival last summer has been similar to that given to Owen. Many fans felt he should have joined Madrid three years ago when he was at his peak, not now. And, like Owen, he has suffered in comparison to three other galacticos – Ronaldo, who has just been sold to Milan, Zinedine Zidane and Luis Figo. Van Nistelrooy isn't going to beat three men and waltz round the keeper, he isn't going to win a match single-handedly. Put simply, he isn't that good. His effort impresses but his football does not.

"Van Nistelrooy's not a footballer," one Madrid fan was quoted saying in the *El Pais* newspaper, from his seat in a bar within spitting distance of the Bernabeu stadium. "Ronaldo. Now, there's a footballer."

Up against Raul, the local hero, captain of Madrid and Spain, and Ronaldo, the all-time great, the highest scorer in World Cup history, Owen and Van Nistelrooy were always going to struggle to stand out. And it has proved even harder for the Dutchman than his English predecessor.

Van Nistelrooy is viewed as a good, honest pro but somehow a bit, well, dull. Not much of a galactico. He has become a symbol of coach Fabio Capello's boring football during Madrid's recent struggles; Ronaldo, the happy-go-lucky Brazilian, the jilted exponent of the beautiful game.

Ronaldo comparisons

It's nonsense, of course. Ronaldo's failure to get fit also meant a failure to deliver: he scored just once in seven starts this season. But there's always the promise with Ronaldo, however much it fails to be fulfilled, of countless wonderful runs, of cool skips round the keeper and thumping finishes, of all the fun. By contrast, all Van Nistelrooy does is score goals, and, worse still, he's even stopped doing that consistently. By the start of February, he had hit 16 in 28 games in all competitions this season, a respectable average of 0.57. The problem is that all those goals were scored in just eight games, including a hat-trick against struggling Levante, four away at Osasuna, at the time enduring one of the worst runs in their history, and two more against second division Ecija in the Copa del Rey. At the time of writing he had gone seven games without scoring and had two four-game droughts earlier in the season.

Even his admirable workrate has started to count against him. One columnist moaned:

Good time...lifting the FA Cup in 2004 with Cristiano Ronaldo at Man Utd

"The Dutchman trots around covering hundreds of pointless kilometres when he should be in the area ready to score."

But he is yet another victim of Madrid's failure, rather than a cause of it. The team are simply creating nothing for a striker fighting a losing battle. And fighting it alone. Of the side's 28 goals in their first 20 matches – their worst return in 16 seasons – a quarter came from set-pieces, and they racked up only 4.4 shots per match – their lowest average in over 20 years. In Madrid's 1-0 defeat at Villarreal on January 27, the Dutchman did not get a single shot.

He can't do it all alone. The problem is that at Madrid, he has to.

Past and present... on the Man Utd bench alongside Alex Ferguson before their fall-out, and in action for Real Madrid

'I'm no angel'

OVER THE PAST three years Real Madrid have had plenty of stars but little coherence. Has that changed?

From day one, [Fabio] Capello was very clear on how each position should function; everyone has their task within the team. He has created a solid unit: four defenders, two controlling midfield players, three attacking players and a deep-lying striker. Capello wants the team to play like an accordion, with everyone going forward and everyone coming back. This requires a lot of energy and he has brought in fitness trainers from Italy who are extremely tough. His work ethic is clear, structured and finely tuned. We do a lot of training using the whole field, and his accent is always on positions. If one player is in position A then the other has to be running into position B. We will also spend five minutes continually pressurising, then dropping back and then again going full out.

How have these methods helped you?

I feel really fit and strong now. That said, my form has been rather strange: I can score four against Osasuna or three against Levante and then go a couple of games without scoring. But that seems to be the pattern of the whole team at the moment. Sometimes everything works to perfection: you see defenders and midfielders vying with each other to get a cross in, which is a dream for any striker. Then there are also matches where we aren't pressurising enough, and in those situations, as the only striker, I have to be continually looking for balls.

How different is the style from Manchester United, and has it been difficult to adapt?

In England, you rarely get the time to play the ball to the midfielders because there is so much power and pressure. That's why the midfield is bypassed, especially in the first 30 minutes. During that period you get a very intense battle, but then things calm down and the game opens up.

In Spain, they pass the ball, and every team starts the build-up from the back. That means I get more time to look for space and find ways to get into the game, and in that respect I'm happy I made this move. It's important that I develop more as a player and am more aware of what I'm doing. I'm thoroughly enjoying the process.

2006 was a difficult year for you. Have you put all the problems behind you?

Last year was the ultimate test of my personality. I was forced to ask myself: "What is really important for me as a person? Where am I in life and how do I face up to other people?" I always treat people correctly, in a positive manner, and that is something that I still believe in strongly. That has always been my starting point in everything I do. I could be more calculated in what I do, but I don't want to bargain with myself. I want to be led by my own feelings. I want to be able to say: "I believe in that and I am standing up for that, end of story." If I couldn't, then I'd stop tomorrow. That's how important this has become for me now.

Your grandfather was once banned for 15 matches for punching an opponent. Have you inherited his character?

I'm no angel. In this game you've got to be a man, but in the correct manner. If I feel I have to stand up for myself, then I do it. My grandfather had the same principle. The incident you describe happened when an opponent pulled the elastic out of his shorts – and in those days a lot of time went into making the shorts, and he only had one pair. He couldn't play with his shorts round his ankles!

Do you regret the way you have handled certain situations in the past?

You can only have regrets if what you do is based on calculated decisions. You can then say that you maybe made the wrong decision. I made my choices based on my beliefs, and that feels good, whatever the outcome. That's why I now have inner peace.

Do you know why things ended so badly at Manchester United?

There was a break-up in the relationship between two people. It originated at the League Cup Final [against Wigan, last February]. After an hour we were 4-0 in front and I was desperate to come on with still 30 minutes left, maybe score a goal and be able to lift the trophy. First Kieran Richardson was brought on, then Nemanja Vidic and Patrice Evra, who had only arrived two weeks before. I exploded and began swearing at [Alex] Ferguson because I felt he had kicked my soul. That was the moment things died and, after that, things would never be good, they could never be the same again.

Was that down to Ferguson or you?

Both of us, and I find it rather tragic. This was the man who visited me in hospital when I had my bad knee injury while I was with PSV. This was the man who wanted me at all costs. It was because our relationship through the years was so warm that this situation was so painful. Ultimately, the way things went says plenty about the football world [United allegedly forced the split so that they could pick up the £10million transfer fee]. But, for me, that isn't a licence to treat people like that. These are considerations you make and, of course, I could have been cold and calculated and thought: this is the way the football world is, I'll stay where I am, take the easy money without any hassles.

How much of a disappointment was last year's World Cup?

We achieved nothing. The team got caught up in a negative cycle. After we'd come through the

Clear instruction...Capello delivers his message

group stage, there was a feeling that the path ahead was clear for us. Then, before the Portugal match, three players – Mark Van Bommel, Khalid Boulahrouz and me – were going to be dropped, which caused unrest within the group. Ultimately, I was the only one who didn't play. What really annoys me is that we'll never know what would have happened if I'd played against Portugal [Holland lost 1-0]. At a World Cup you should be able to give your all.

For me, we didn't do enough, and it's a pity he [coach Marco Van Basten] never even tried alternatives, like me playing up front, with Robin Van Persie behind me and Dirk Kuijt on the right. Instead, he chose Rafael Van der Vaart. But then, what do I know? I'm looking at it from my point of view, but that's only human.

Why do you feel Van Basten had a problem with you?

I don't know. Maybe he didn't like the way I responded during our final days at the World Cup or how I spoke to him. All I did was to state my case in front of the whole group, but I knew beforehand that Van Basten's response would be drastic. If he doesn't like something, then you're finished. There's nothing wrong with that and at that moment it's his truth that counts. But I'd still have preferred that after the tournament he'd told me straight to my face: "I'm finished with you. I'm not pleased with how you played or how you conducted yourself. Let's shake hands, but you'll not play again for me." Then I could have responded by saying: "I don't know why you're talking nonsense but at least I know where I stand." Then I would have had more respect for him.

Van Basten was your boyhood idol. Has he now fallen off his pedestal?

Not as a footballer.

End game…being substituted at the World Cup

Do you still bear a grudge against him and Ferguson?

Not at all. In Spain, we see a lot of Manchester United matches. The first time I watched them I found myself thinking: "There he is, that…", and that felt good. It was the same with Holland. But now I am at peace with it all and have no problem watching games. After the World Cup, I accepted what happened and moved on.

Edwin Van der Sar spoke up for you in public. That must have pleased you?

Yes. For me that shows he has character. He's a good captain of the Holland team and a good person…and that makes me feel good. Nobody else [supported me], but it doesn't matter. I understand why. I react the way I do because I'm at an age [30] where I have experience. Van der Sar is in the same position. He's 36, the captain, and in a position to do that; but young players think to themselves: "I want to play for the national team or for my club, so I'll hold my tongue."

Dirk Kuijt didn't hold his tongue. He was publicly critical of you. He said you should have kept things in the dressing room.

If you want to reason along those lines then he should also have kept that comment inside the dressing room or kept it to himself. Or he could have called me instead of going on TV. Some guys are just so calculated in their actions, especially when it's to their advantage. They say what others want to hear, not what they mean.

How do you cope with the pressure and media hype at Real Madrid?

My father was at the most recent Real Madrid-Barcelona match and afterwards he couldn't believe all the names that were there. It's only at moments like that when I think about where I am. When I first moved from Heerenveen to PSV Eindhoven I was scared; I thought to myself: "What will it be like among all those great players?" But now I know that the changing room at Real is no different from the one at Heerenveen; there is the same kind of joking and messing about; savouring victories and working through defeats together. These are the same feelings I had as a boy, and the same reasons that always made me want to play football.

The most important thing for me, amid all the pressure, is that I savour the purity of the game: the football, the training, the team spirit – that's what it's all about for me. Of course, you can't ignore all the other things that are required from a player. But football has become so huge that if you pay attention to everything in the media you'd go crazy.

The media hype is an integral part of club life. Every day, the mixed zone is full of journalists, which is very demanding. Every day you're being judged, and not on the number of goals you've scored; no, it's on how you greet the press or how you walk. If I don't shave one morning, then the next day I read that I'm scruffy and untidy or that I must be very tired. You're treated like public property, and to survive you have to distance yourself from the hype. Stay grounded and don't let yourself get carried away. Whenever I have something running round my head, I sit down and write everything down. When I have everything down on paper the way I want it, the burden is removed. Writing things down is therapeutic.

Are Real Madrid bigger than United?

United were big but Real Madrid are on another level. I could have gone to Bayern Munich or Milan but it had to be Real. This club has a special allure; everything about it oozes elegance, style and pure class. The legend on the team shirt reads "Club of the Century". That says it all. The players are always expected to dress smartly, in suits and ties. Everyone realises that they represent a very special club. And that is also reflected in the club's football philosophy. It doesn't always work out, but the belief is that there must be something beautiful, something special about the way the team plays. And there are the moments when you bump into old players, such as Di Stefano and Gento, who won all those European Cups. As a football enthusiast I enjoy these encounters immensely.

Real Madrid have had a trophy drought recently. Can you win something this season?

Every day we're working on improving. We can't do any more than that. If you carry on working at it, eventually you will win a prize. I felt that when United won the title in 2003. We are champions – the sense of that is overwhelming. ●

Van Basten: "It's over with Ruud"

HOLLAND COACH Marco Van Basten recently confirmed that Ruud Van Nistelrooy has played his last game for the national team under him. "Ruud more or less resigned from the job, and that closes the case for me," Van Basten said. "We believe it is a shame after we had an open and honest conversation but we will not take any further initiatives."

'I COULD HAVE GONE TO BAYERN MUNICH OR MILAN BUT IT HAD TO BE REAL MADRID'

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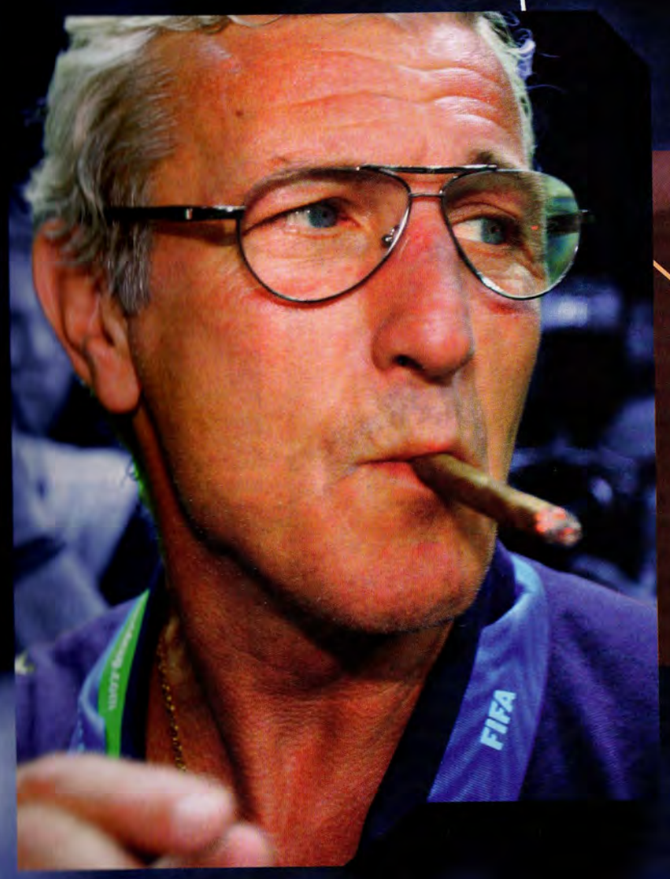

Face to face with Italy's World Cup-winning coach Marcello Lippi

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APRIL ISSUE ON SALE MARCH 16

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SIX of the best

January signings

1 Fernando Cavenaghi

AFTER TWO DISMAL years at Spartak Moscow, Argentinian striker Fernando Cavenaghi is under no illusion that he must deliver at new club Bordeaux. Another barren spell in front of goal and his career might never recover, even though he is still only 23.

Cavenaghi could not stop scoring for River Plate in the early part of the decade, his 55 goals in 88 matches putting scouts from Italy and Spain into a frenzy. A Latin corner of Europe would have suited the whizzkid perfectly but instead he and his representatives thought it best to answer the siren call of Spartak, who splashed out £5.7million in 2004. The culture shock of Moscow and the artificial pitches were simply too much for the South American, the goals dried up – just a dozen in two seasons – and he fell off the radar. Time to move on.

There's no question about Cavenaghi's nose for chances, his technical polish and ability to finish smartly with either foot. But how much homework went into his choice of Bordeaux? "I know Bordeaux's reputation as the biggest club in France," he told his first press conference. Lyon, Ligue 1 champions for the past five seasons, would have something to say about that.

2 Lucas Mareque

FC PORTO fans watching new Argentinian recruit Lucas Mareque could be excused for mistaking the signing from River Plate for Argentina's national team captain Juan Pablo Sorin. Not only do the pair share a position (left-back or wing-back), but they also look strikingly similar, both having squat physiques and long, dark hair.

Mareque, who also holds an Italian passport, approaches his defensive duties with typical Argentinian grit and single-mindedness but his strongest points are dynamic overlapping, crisp passing and sound crossing. His creative ability should not come as a surprise. As a youngster he used to wear the No 10 shirt and has experience as a winger.

He began his career in Racing Club's schoolboy side, but switched to the River Plate academy because the club were closer to home. He is very much a chip off the old block, the son of the late Armando Mareque, a former Velez Sarsfield defender who was later a successful coach.

3 Alexander Kerzhakov

SEVILLA'S PUSH for the Spanish League title prompted them to pay Zenit St Petersburg £3.5million for Russia striker Alexander Kerzhakov in what was the first act of a long-term partnership between the two clubs.

Some in Russia believe new Zenit boss Dick Advocaat was too quick to declare the 24-year-old surplus to requirements. After all, he has proved by far the best finisher at the club over the past five years, regularly placed among the leading marksmen in the country.

Kerzhakov, who is contracted to Sevilla until 2012, was also sought this winter by Lyon, Marseille and Tottenham but had eyes only for the Iberians after playing them in the UEFA Cup. He says: "On getting to know Sevilla, their attacking play, the city, their passionate fans, I fell in love with the place. They are the UEFA Cup holders but that is not their true level. They belong in the Champions League."

4 Radoslaw Matusiak

IN-FORM GKS Belchatow striker Radoslaw Matusiak became the sixth Pole to set up home in Serie A when signing for Palermo for £1.3million. The 24-year-old is unlikely to prove as big a hit in the peninsula as Zibi Boniek, a star for Juventus and Roma in the 1980s. But coach Francesco Guidolin is sure Matusiak's strong running and opportunism will enhance his side, adding that he expects the Pole and Brazilian Amauri to form a deadly duo.

Matusiak's career has really taken off this season, netting nine times in the autumn to propel unfashionable Belchatow to the top of the Polish League and becoming a national team hero thanks to his winning goal against Belgium in a Euro 2008 qualifier in November. He has already enjoyed continental success, having been a member of the Polish Under-16 side that took silver at the 1999 European Championship.

5 Marcelinho

MAVERICK BRAZILIAN playmaker Marcelinho is renowned for his unpredictability and he lived up to his reputation this January. The man of the multi-coloured hairstyles and sumptuous ball skills admitted he had made a mistake in quitting Hertha Berlin for Trabzonspor in the summer and promptly took the first available flight back to Germany, where he signed for Wolfsburg.

Marcelinho's mission is simple – to inject ideas, style and vision into a workmanlike but decidedly uninspiring midfield to ensure the VW club rise clear of relegation danger. It should not be beyond him; after all, he gave full value in five years at Hertha – 65 goals and 49 assists.

One problem. The 31-year-old does like to party, and to ensure he does not play away at his favourite Berlin nightspots, Wolfsburg insisted on a clause in his contract that he live locally rather than in the capital.

6 Vincenzo Montella

IT DID NOT take long for Vincenzo Montella to become a cult hero at Fulham, whom he joined on a six-month loan from Roma. Two goals in an FA Cup win over Leicester, another in the same competition against Stoke and a penalty in a league fixture with Tottenham proved the 32-year-old had lost none of his penalty-box sharpness.

The diminutive Italian is the archetypal goalpoacher – explosive on the turn, clever in his off-ball runs and obsessed with putting away chances. What's more, he is just as effective used as a substitute, able to quickly adjust to the pace of a game.

Observers in Italy thought he was damaged goods after missing much of last season with back and shoulder injuries. Montella, nicknamed the "Little Aeroplane" because of his trademark goal celebration, is out to prove them wrong.

Profiles by Nick Bidwell

Platini the purist?

UEFA's new president faces a battle to fulfil his election promises

IN THEIR LUXURIOUS outposts across western Europe, the presidents and chief executives of the clubs of the G-14 may well have been toasting the election of 51-year-old Michel Platini as UEFA president.

Platini? The man who wants to reduce from four to three the Champions League entry permits for clubs from England, Italy and Spain? Yes, because he has handed G-14 a reason for existence.

The Frenchman has also, effectively, put Lennart Johansson out of political existence. The 77-year-old Swede looked stunned on learning, at UEFA congress in Dusseldorf, the result of the election – Platini 27 votes, to his own 23. Johansson had never faced a challenge since taking the helm in 1990. Now, he had not only been deposed as UEFA president but also kicked off the FIFA executive committee, on which he had sat as a vice-president by virtue of his European status.

Johansson had only himself to blame. This was the second time he had sought to extend his term of office to stop Platini; that was a disreputable reason for carrying on. Also, he was obviously too old and had failed to groom a potential successor in his own image.

Platini immediately had Johansson voted, by acclamation, as "honorary president" of UEFA, which means the Swede will still receive VIP match tickets and five-star travel. But the legacy he wanted to protect, built on the wealth of the Champions League, will change. Perhaps not as much as some of Platini's supporters would hope, but change nonetheless.

Indeed, the first sign was flagged up within six days of Platini's enthronement when Lars-Christer Olsson, installed as UEFA's chief executive by his compatriot and mentor Johansson, resigned. Gianni Infantino took over on an interim basis, with Scottish FA chief executive David Taylor an early front-runner to be the long-term appointment.

"I'm moved, enormously moved, but I am happy," Platini told delegates after the election result. "The establishment was fighting for Johansson but I counted on my friends to help me. When I was a footballer, when you'd had a great victory, you received a cup and went on a lap of honour with all your friends around the pitch. Today is a great victory for me but I'm not going to do a lap of honour because we need to get started. This is the start of a great adventure."

'I'm not going to do a lap of honour because we need to get started'

Almost as happy was FIFA president Sepp Blatter, who had weighed in pretty obviously on the side of his former counsellor. He said: "The result is no surprise to me. I am happy I'll be working with someone who has the same vision for football as I do, not only as a means of making money but as a social foundation." Not that Platini was conceding too much to Blatter's interventions. He said: "Maybe Blatter won me some votes but he also could have lost me some."

Western Europe largely voted for Johansson, partly to maintain the status quo but also to protect the formula by which top-ranked England, Italy and Spain have four entries into the Champions League.

Platini, famously, wants that cut to three in time for 2009-10, though whether he will carry that through remains to be seen. He has the mandate but he has already compromised his ideas for Champions League reconstruction significantly already. (The significance of the date is that 2009 is when the next round of TV contracts will come into effect.)

It is not beyond the realms of possibility that Platini may eventually settle on a reorganising of the qualifying rounds so that the Big Three's third and fourth-placed clubs start their campaigns earlier. That would certainly line up with Platini's own wish to see the big nations and their clubs forced to play a greater missionary role in taking their stars to more far-flung outposts of the European game than is at present the case.

Platini will also be taking a long look at the dog's dinner that is the UEFA Cup. No one likes the five-club mini leagues and proposals are being formulated to introduce four-team groups but maybe at a slightly earlier stage of the competition.

Farewell hug...president Platini embraces predecessor Johansson

Welcome issue

At least the prospect of Champions League changes – in whatever form – have provided G-14 with a welcome issue to address. The elite group of Europe's top clubs (bar Chelsea) had just run clean out of ideas once the issue of compensation for national team call-ups vanished into the European Court system. Now they have the chance to rattle their sabres over the issue of Champions League representation, which matters desperately to their members' enriched but fragile financial structures. These are mostly clubs – from Real Madrid to Porto – whose annual accounts depend on Champions League income and who have most to lose.

Platini has little sympathy for them, of course. As we have discussed here before, he comes from a French football culture that lags far behind most of the rest of western Europe in terms of its readiness to compromise with the commercial realities of today's professional sport.

Of course, this can also be seen as a strength: Platini believes in football still as first and foremost a sport and is far more wary than Johansson of the pressures of commercial and legal issues. How effectively he can maintain that purist stance as UEFA president will be fascinating to watch.

UEFA CONGRESS ALSO DECIDED:

1) To accept Montenegro as a full, 53rd member
2) To reject the contentious membership application of Gibraltar
3) To vote Franz Beckenbauer on to the FIFA executive as a UEFA representative in succession to retiring fellow German Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder
4) To vote Icelandic FA president Eggert Magnusson off the UEFA executive as punishment for daring to stand again despite becoming effective owner of West Ham United
5) To study a proposal from Scotland and Ireland to increase the number of teams at European Championship finals from 16 to 24

Already signed...a line-up of representatives of the eight teams to wear Nike kit at the 2006 World Cup

Adidas v Nike: Germany's kit wars

SEISMIC EVENTS IN Germany, where Nike has been threatening to replace Adidas as national team sponsor. This is not merely a matter of money; this is cultural revolution. Adidas is to Germany what Rolls-Royce always was to England – the unimpeachable, irreproachable, impregnable fortress of everything that is good and efficient and respected about the national industrial effort.

The story of Adidas and German sport in general goes back to the 1930s when Adolf Dassler decided the 1936 Berlin Olympics would be an ideal setting to promote his sports shoes. The German track and field authorities disagreed. So Dassler went to some of the other competing nations. Most notably, he provided his spikes to Jesse Owens; thus the most famous sporting snub to any dictator was delivered to Adolf Hitler by a black American wearing German running shoes.

It's a matter of legend how, after the war, the company split into what is now Adidas (Adolf) and Puma (Adolf's brother Rudolf), with their respective headquarters on either side of the little river that runs through the northern Bavarian town of Herzogenaurach.

Adolf was quicker off the mark with the German federation after the war. Indeed, much of the power of the Adidas legend was built on its role in winning the 1954 World Cup with the first changeable studs: in the rain of the Final in Berne the German players changed studs at half-time and thus completed their recovery from 2-0 down to beat the mighty Hungarians of Ferenc Puskas 3-2.

Ever since, Adidas has been a national team partner, far closer than any "normal" sponsor. Indeed, such was the power of Adidas in world football that, under the political direction of scion Horst Dassler, it effectively won the FIFA presidency for Joao Havelange in 1974 and then took over the World Cup's commercial business through a marketing offshoot, ISL.

No surprise, then, that the official ball for a World Cup is always an Adidas creation, though the company has had to "come out" over the past decade (and pay out) as a formal sponsor of the tournament.

Unhappy camp

But all was not well within the German football camp and anger about the Adidas monopoly erupted at the World Cup last summer. Goalkeeper Jens Lehmann was unhappy at having to wear Adidas gloves and striker Miroslav Klose upset at having to wear Adidas boots. The reason? Both players had personal sponsorships with Nike. Advisers to Klose, in particular, estimated that being forced to wear Adidas cost him several million pounds in promotional work.

An extra shadow over the connection between the German federation (DFB) and Adidas was that, in 2004, ex-international forward Oliver Bierhoff gave up a lucrative deal with Nike to become Germany's team manager. No surprise, then, that he was the first port of call when Nike decided last November to pitch for the federation sponsorship.

The present Adidas deal runs until 2010 according to the DFB and 2014 according to Adidas, and the federation has already begun studying how it might buy its freedom after Nike offered £350million, six times more money than the present deal. Adidas shares have dropped more than three per cent in value – which may be a significant straw in the wind about how the DFB is thinking.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

...THE HEADLINE-MAKERS OFF THE PITCH

Franz Beckenbauer

● PHILIPPE PIOLA...
The head of entertainment studies at the Euromed business school in Marseille came up with a sadly prophetic warning as co-author of a French report into the collapse of Italian football. Piola and his colleagues from Ineum management consultants in Paris warned that calcio was losing ground to its European rivals with ageing stadiums, problems on the terraces and a television free-for-all that had all combined to drive attendances down.

● JORGE NUNO PINTO DA COSTA...
Porto's all-powerful president is under increasing pressure after the Portuguese federation decided to launch disciplinary action against 11 referees for having shown "signs of corruption in official matches".

The federation's decision, as part of the so-called "golden whistle" inquiry, followed publication of a book by Carolina Salgado, a former girlfriend of Pinto da Costa, in which she alleges the club had often paid bribes to referees.

● MASSIMO MORATTI...
The Internazionale president, who had largely sidestepped Italy's recent soccer scandals, was finally drawn into controversy after his club were accused of falsifying transfer documents relating to Simone Brunelli. The goalkeeper moved from Milan to Inter in 2003 but then, after being sent on loan to a series of lower division clubs, claimed the signature on the transfer documents was not his. The deal is also the subject of a separate investigation by magistrates into false accounting by both clubs.

Keir Radnedge

● FRANZ BECKENBAUER...
The German may have overtaken Michel Platini in the unofficial race to become the first major player to graduate to president of FIFA. While Platini grabbed all the headlines after ousting Lennart Johansson as UEFA president, the European body's congress in Dusseldorf also voted Beckenbauer on to the FIFA executive after the retirement of former German federation joint president Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder.

A separate ballot for six vacant seats on the UEFA executive brought re-election for Angel Maria Villar Llona (Spain), Senes Erzik (Turkey) and Joseph Mifsud (Malta), and election for Mircea Sandu (Romania), Gilberto Madail (Portugal) and Hryhorii Surkis (Ukraine). Voted off were Giangiorgio Spiess (Switzerland) and Iceland's Eggert Magnusson, the new chairman of West Ham United.

Beckenbauer and Platini thus join the list of power-achieving former internationals. Other notables have included Giampiero Boniperti (Italy and Juventus player and then Juve president), Wolfgang Overath (West Germany, Koln and now Koln president) and Allan Hansen (Denmark, Hamburg and now Danish federation president).

● JOHN McBETH...
Never mind English Premier League chief executive Richard Scudamore or Football Association boss Brian Barwick, Scotland's John McBeth is the United Kingdom's most powerful football politician.

The SFA president emerged as surprise winner of a protracted struggle to succeed David Will as the home nations' FIFA vice-president.

McBeth's victory was a major blow for England's Geoff Thompson, who had seen "promotion" to FIFA as a way out of the chairmanship of the FA, in which he has been increasingly marginalised by the power-brokers of the Premier League.

The four home nations hold a permanent vice-presidency of FIFA under a statute originally created in negotiations for the return to FIFA in 1947 of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

John McBeth

Massimo Moratti

Jorge Nuno Pinto da Costa

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Let's see that again

Referees must be allowed to use TV replays to help them decide on incidents during games

You're off...Zidane trudges past fourth official Luis Medina Cantalejo, who spotted his butt on Materazzi

IT'S TIME TO call a halt to all this tentative talk about the use of technology in football. We shouldn't, in this day and age, be wondering if or when instant replays will be allowed in the sport. Clearly, there is no "if" about it any more. It is going to happen. We should be talking about how technology is going to used.

The FIFA Luddites will no doubt continue their mindless opposition, but their voice becomes more strident and less credible each time they shout their defiance.

It is not that they are standing in the way of progress – I have many problems with that word progress, anyway – it is more that they are trying to squelch common sense.

This sort of thing: a player commits a flagrant foul – punches an opponent, say – off the ball, a foul that neither the referee sees nor his assistants. But the television cameras see it at once, and show the replays immediately. So millions of viewers and probably the press in the stadium know that a player should be red-carded – and the one man who really needs to know that, who is in a position to act on it, doesn't know. In effect, he is prevented from knowing because FIFA insists he should be kept in the dark.

What I have just described is not a fanciful notion. It happened in last year's World Cup Final, the famous Zinedine Zidane butt on Marco Materazzi that none of the officiating

'The smart ball has evidently failed to be as smart as FIFA would wish'

trio saw, but that the fourth official did see because, somewhat conveniently, he just happened to be looking in the right direction.

I am not the only one who feels doubt about that. Alex Ferguson recently said: "It's interesting because I don't think there is any doubt the fourth official got Zidane sent off after viewing the incident on a TV screen."

Interesting indeed, because had the official seen it only on his television monitor, his evidence would not have been acceptable to FIFA because it was TV replay evidence, and Zidane should not have been red-carded.

That is the sort of nonsensical tangle that FIFA's anti-common sense attitude is bound to engender. Ferguson's remark was part of an appeal on his part for the use of technology, particularly in cases where there is doubt about whether a goal has been scored, doubt about whether the ball crossed the line.

Caught on camera...the "smart ball" technology was given a try-out at the Under-17 World Championship in Peru but proved of little value

Ferguson said: "Football has to open its eyes a bit wider...technology will eventually come – maybe not in my lifetime, but it will come."

Arsene Wenger is another advocate of goal-line technology, saying: "If there are situations where you are sure that if you look at a video you can see if [the ball] is in or not, why do we refuse to use that? It is not stubbornness, it is stupidity."

Franz Beckenbauer has endorsed goal-line technology, too, though he sees it as "the only form of technology I am prepared to accept being introduced to football". This referred to the elaborate, highly-expensive microchip-in-the-ball technology FIFA was supposed to introduce at last year's World Cup.

The "smart ball" was not used – evidently it has failed to be as smart as FIFA would wish. That the complex set-up required by the smart ball should even be considered is, in fact, merely another manifestation of the stupidity of FIFA's position. I was in Peru in 2005, at the Under-17 World Championship, when the smart ball was first tested.

Although Sepp Blatter later claimed that the test had given "some interesting results", it is clear nothing positive came out of the tests at all. The technology was anything but foolproof, even at its most basic level. All the teams were given smart balls to practice with, and the USA quickly discovered that one of theirs rattled, evidently because of a loose microchip. It was quickly replaced.

FIFA general secretary Urs Linsi gave a long and tedious explanation of why the smart ball was necessary, of why a couple of strategically-placed television cameras wouldn't be good enough. There must be no replays, he insisted, because football action is non-stop, it must not be halted to look at a television screen. The smart ball sent – or was supposed to send – an instant message to the referee, telling him whether a goal had been scored or not. It operated within the concept of "real time".

Well, maybe. But football is anything but a non-stop sport. Most of the statistics I've seen reveal that, during a 90-minute game, the ball is actually in play for only 60 minutes. There are plenty of opportunities to look at replays during a game that would cause only minimal, if any, slowing down of the action.

Wenger insists that French television has "created a system...where they can see 100 per cent if the ball has crossed the line. Technologically it is easy to do now."

Even if he is exaggerating, can there be any doubt that such technology, an "easy" technology, will be developed in the near future? What needs to be decided is under what circumstances it should be used.

Certainly not indiscriminately. TV evidence should be used to punish flagrant off-the-ball fouls, to decide on goal-line incidents, and to measure movement by goalkeepers during penalty shoot-outs – in the latter case, there is no action to interrupt, no "real time" argument applies. The shoot-out situation is a good test, because, sadly, it occurs much more frequently than goal-line quandaries, and shoot-outs are always game-deciding. It's worth remembering that four of the six major international champions – Italy in the World Cup, the USA in CONCACAF, Brazil in South America and Egypt in Africa – won their titles after shoot-outs.

For those who fear constant interruptions while officials argue over replays, the easy answer is to limit each team to one or two challenges per game. Probably all such challenges should be limited to matters of fact – e.g. determining whether a foul has been committed inside or outside the box.

The difficult one would be offside. The problems surrounding goals disallowed for offside, or goals that are allowed when they should not have been, seem too great to allow any use of replays. But the use of hands – either by the attacking side or the defence – should be a replay matter.

The use of replays is not to be seen as a challenge to the referees' authority. It is rather an aid to refereeing, something they can use to avoid making a critically wrong decision.

Maybe I have spread the net too wide. It could be that the only acceptable use of technology – the only workable use – is to decide goal-line incidents.

Most people would be satisfied with that. The technology is available, replays from any half-decent TV broadcast will do the trick. Only mulish stubbornness from FIFA, a refusal to move with the times, stands in the way of its use. An absurdity. As Wenger has put it: "To say...it was done like that in 1920 is not good enough, it is as simple as that."

'Only FIFA's refusal to move with the times stands in the way of technology's use'

WS WORLD SOCCER HOME FRONT David Conn

Valley of despond

The good work of the Curbishley years at Charlton has been undermined in just a few months

THERE IS SOMETHING depressing about seeing Charlton Athletic struggling so desperately to maintain their dignity and their place in the Premier League. The club had 15 years of stability under Alan Curbishley, who calmly steered the Addicks from near-ruin to being proud Premiership mainstays.

It was one of the great and lesser-celebrated of English football's achievements. But Curbishley's departure at the end of last season, saying he was tired and needed a break, forced The Valley to face a footballing truth: that clubs can be shining lights in their attitudes, relations with supporters and community programmes, but their fortunes depend enormously on just one person – the manager.

Most clubs enjoying extended periods of achievement have also had long-serving managers – Arsenal with Arsene Wenger and Manchester United with Alex Ferguson; Liverpool with Bill Shankly and Bob Paisley; even Crewe Alexandra with Dario Gradi. Charlton with Curbishley fitted the mould, too.

History has shown that when such men finally leave, the club have a fiendishly difficult job to manage the succession. Sadly, Charlton seem to have botched it. The club are now on to their third manager since Curbishley departed a few short months ago. The first was Iain Dowie, which always seemed a risky appointment. He certainly showed he had talent in 18 months at third level Oldham and two and a half years at second tier Crystal Palace, marrying coaching intelligence to a manic motivational approach to achieve inspirational results for both clubs. But it was a huge gamble for a manager with that experience to be expected to ensure that a worn Charlton side maintained Premier League status.

'Les Reed's attempts to handle the large egos of a Premiership dressing room were never convincing and his media performances were painful'

Lame defeats

The directors, all fans of the club, were keen to maintain their policy of keeping faith in their manager, and they entrusted Dowie with £11.2million to buy new players, including forward Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink. Then, when the season started with lame defeats, the board decided the risk of relegation, with the possible loss of £40m revenue, was too great with Dowie in charge. So, quite shockingly, after only 12 games, Charlton became the first top-flight club to sack their manager. Chairman Richard Murray confessed that it went against his belief in the importance of stability, but said a "structural review" of the club had persuaded him Dowie's performance would not improve.

The structural review itself might need reviewing because in Dowie's place Charlton appointed Les Reed, a coach of long experience but with none as a manager. His attempts to handle the large egos of a Premiership dressing room were never convincing and his media performances were painful. Charlton soon realised they had made another mistake, so on Christmas Eve Reed suddenly left by "mutual consent".

Then Alan Pardew stepped back on to the managerial merry-go-round having had two bruised weeks off it following his December 11 sacking by West Ham's new owners, Eggert Magnusson and Bjorgolfur Gudmundsson. The Icelanders, having convinced themselves that £85m was a sensible price to pay for the Hammers, decided that the man to stabilise their investment was none other than Curbishley, the former West Ham player with the steady managerial record at Charlton.

But so far this game of musical chairs has not done either club much good. Pardew looks as if he is still coming to terms with his sacking and has jumped into another difficult job too soon. Curbishley's calm, considered approach, developed during his long tenure at Charlton, seems entirely unsuited to the task of shaking up a grumpy group of West Ham players unsettled by the arrival of Argentinians Carlos Tevez and Javier Mascherano.

The squad are solid and played above themselves to finish ninth in the Premiership and reach the FA Cup Final last season. But now they have lost their spirit, and when West Ham folded 6-0 at Reading on New Year's Day, Curbishley looked like a man wishing he had never ended his sabbatical.

Shouting the odds...Curbishley was at the forefront during Charlton's years of stability

This all underlines another footballing truth – that clubs sack managers as a reflex reaction to their woes, but that very often it doesn't help. Charlton had many months to plan Curbishley's replacement, so having appointed Dowie, they might have given him longer than 12 games to develop. At West Ham, perhaps Magnusson and Gudmundsson should have looked a little harder at the roots of the team's problems before firing Pardew and pinning their hopes on Curbishley.

Nevertheless, it is sad to see Charlton looking so awful and troubled. Their very survival as a club, let alone one with Premier League status, represents a great achievement, which deserves wider recognition.

In 1985, the club, like so many others in England, were in financial ruin and forced to leave The Valley. At first they became tenants of Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park then West Ham at Upton Park, playing in front of crowds as low as 8,000. The weeds growing through The Valley's terraces became an iconic image of football's crisis, but the fans never lost their faith in the club. Supporters formed their own political party, The Valley Party, campaigning solely for the club to be given planning permission to rebuild their home ground. Then, when permission was granted, the fans went gleefully with spades and shovels to dig for the club's future.

Triumphant return

Curbishley was appointed in 1991, at first jointly with Steve Gritt, and the club, backed by Murray and a board of businessmen fans, led Charlton triumphantly back to a reborn Valley a year later. They implemented a long-term plan to develop the ground and the club's supporter base, while Curbishley laid the foundations for a youth policy and innovative coaching methods that produced promotion to the Premier League in 1998.

They were relegated the following season, but made an instant return, and they have been in the top division ever since.

But although the decline this season looks attributable to Curbishley's departure, many fans say that in fact the team have been on the wane for two years and that the manager left because a team rebuild was required.

Charlton will be a loss if they go down because they never, as a club, lost touch with where they had come from. Murray and chief executive Peter Varney did not sell the club's soul for the Premier League dollar, and for years they have consistently argued for a fairer distribution of TV money, both within the Premier League and to the Football League, to ensure a more even competition.

Recently, Varney has become more outspoken, arguing that for all Charlton's efforts to preserve affordable ticket prices, the Premier League's dominance by money, Sky TV and the richest clubs is in danger of killing the game. He also repeated the need for the money to be shared, saying: "There are great clubs in the Football League, losing the chance to compete, the game is becoming lost to ordinary people, and that is a very bad direction for English football to be taking."

It will be a great pity if Charlton's voice is lost to the Premier League because, in five months of madness, they blew 15 years of exemplary work.

'The weeds growing through The Valley's terraces became an iconic image of football's crisis, but the fans never lost their faith in the club'

The way we were...an upturned supermarket trolley rests forlornly on the overgrown pitch during Charlton's exile

Pitch perfect

Brian Glanville recalls the dazzling playing career of new UEFA president Michel Platini

Shooting star…Platini lets fly for France against Northern Ireland at the 1982 World Cup and (inset) for Juventus against Hamburg in the 1983 European Cup Final

WAS MICHEL PLATINI, now elevated to the purple of UEFA president, the finest French footballer of all time? It must come to a close finish between him and Raymond Kopa, the deep-lying, inspirational forward of the team that took third place at the 1958 World Cup.

What became apparent early in Platini's dazzling career, which included three World Cups to Kopa's one, was that he was the absolute perfectionist. If I have a particular image of him, it comes not from any of the many games he embellished, but from the training ground where, day after day, time after time, he would line up a row of wooden dummies in front of a goal and try to beat them with his right-foot shots.

That right foot was one of the finest and most effective the game has ever known, worthy to be classed with that – more explosive but perhaps less subtle – of Portugal's Eusebio.

Platini's 72 games for France brought him 41 goals. Among the dozens he scored at club level was the penalty that won Juventus the 1985 European Cup against Liverpool, a game wholly overshadowed by the deaths and disaster of Heysel.

Platini was born in Lorraine in the little town of Joeuf on June 21, 1955, the grandson of an Italian immigrant. He joined the local club, at first as a centre-forward, when just 11, and stayed there for six years. The lucky club to make him a professional were nearby Nancy, his father, Aldo, himself a coach, being friendly with their scout. Platini made his first-team debut at 17 and won his first cap at 20 in March 1976. By then, hard work had made his left foot highly effective, if not as formidable as his right, while his dribbling was described "as cutting as the blade of a knife".

Home tie...Platini relaxes with a book in 1975

Elegant stylist

Fluent, good looking, an elegant stylist on and off the field, he quickly became the salient French player of his time. Nancy, who had only recently acquired professional status, benefited accordingly, but it was inevitable that Platini would move on to a bigger, more successful club, Saint-Etienne.

He would stay there just three years during which, in 1981, he won his only French championship medal. Leaving Nancy meant separation at last from his devoted father, no mean footballer himself in his day, and a maths teacher, who had followed him to Nancy, as a coach.

Nancy had initially used Platini as a left-winger, and he had shown his goalscoring flair from that position, but it was natural, and more welcome to him, that he should move into central midfield.

By the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, Platini was an established European star. He was not on his best form in the opening game, a 2-1 defeat against Italy in Mar del Plata, when he was somewhat aggressively marked by Marco Tardelli. He complained afterwards of a lack of support in midfield, but it was another story when Dominique Bathenay returned to play strongly beside him in the next game, against the hosts in Buenos Aires. Yet France were impeded by wretched refereeing in the River Plate stadium, Argentina's opening goal just before half-time coming from a farcical penalty.

Platini equalised on the hour after Bernard Lacombe's shot rebounded from the bar, and his superb run and pass should have enabled Didier Six to put France ahead. But the chance was missed, France were then denied a penalty when Six was blatantly pulled down having been put through again by Platini, and Argentina won 2-1.

That defeat meant France had no chance of qualifying, making their 3-1 win over Hungary academic.

Platini struggled with injury during the first group phase of his second World Cup, in Spain, and he was seen at his best only in the second phase game against Northern Ireland in Madrid. One of a scintillating, all-inventive midfield, Platini was irresistible as he floated between attack and midfield during the 4-1 win.

So to the horrific semi-final against West Germany in Seville, blemished by the brutal assault on French full-back Patrick Battiston by German keeper Toni Schumacher.

Pierre Littbarski had put the Germans ahead, but Platini equalised from a penalty, kissing the ball before putting it on the spot. Then, in extra-time, France went 3-1 ahead, but promptly conceded a goal by Karl-Heinz Rummenigge that Platini later called "scandalous", insisting that he himself had just been fouled, and in a way "that must have been seen by everybody but the referee" – inept Dutchman Charles Corver. West Germany equalised and got their shabby victory on penalties.

Platini then moved to Juventus, and further triumphs. He was the club's leading scorer both times he won Serie A – 1983-84 (with 20 goals) and 1985-86 (12) – and it was during his time in Turin that he won the European Footballer of the Year award three consecutive times: 1983, 1984 and 1985.

The 1984 award was also, of course, in recognition of his role as captain of France as they won the European Championship on home soil. But they did so without any real panache in the semi-finals and Final, having made a coruscating start.

Portugal gave the French a tremendous run for their money in the semis and it was only in the last seconds of extra-time that Platini, previously defied by fine keeper Manuel Bento, took a pass from Jean Tigana and scored to give his side a 3-2 win.

By the same token, France's performance in the Final against a Spanish team weakened by the absence of key players was an anti-climax. Platini did open the scoring but only courtesy of a grotesque goalkeeping fumble, and the eventual 2-0 scoreline was flattering.

Third World Cup

Platini's third World Cup was Mexico in 1986. Once again, he struggled with injury during the early stages, but once again he would flourish.

France made it through their group unbeaten to set up a second round tie against Italy in Mexico City. Despite Platini's injury – tendonitis – over-cautious Italy coach Enzo Bearzot still unbalanced his team by setting Giuseppe Baresi to man-mark him, reasoning that the defender had successfully done this job for Inter against Juventus in Serie A games. It emphatically did not work this time. Exploiting a through pass from Dominique Rocheteau, on 13 minutes, Platini neatly chipped keeper Giovanni Galli to open the scoring. A negative Italy never really got into the game and Platini didn't have to be at his best. On 56 minutes, Yannick Stopyra made it 2-0, the final score.

By contrast, the quarter-final in Guadalajara was ebullient. Brazil outplayed France in the early stages and went ahead through Careca. Platini had been quite marginal till, shortly before half-time, a deflected cross from Rocheteau reached him at the far post and he equalised.

Platini himself missed in the penalty shoot-out, putting his kick over the bar, but France still won, 4-3. Then came another semi-final defeat to West Germany, this time 2-0.

He was only 32 and still in form when he decided to retire, observing: "I've done what I could. I've no regrets."

In 1988 he was appointed coach of the national team, despite having no management experience, and stayed in office till June 1992. But he couldn't emulate the success of Franz Beckenbauer, who was similarly inexperienced when handed the West Germany reins but led the side to win the 1990 World Cup.

Platini then moved into the upper echelons of administration – co-president of France's 1998 World Cup organising committee, special counsellor to FIFA president Sepp Blatter from 1999 to 2002, vice-president of the French federation from 2001, member of the executive committees of UEFA and FIFA.

Then came his crowning achievement, when he succeeded, after vigorous campaigning, in defeating long-standing incumbent Lennart Johansson in the UEFA presidential election.

'HE WAS ONLY 32 AND STILL IN FORM WHEN HE DECIDED TO RETIRE'

FA Congress 2007
Presidential address...after getting UEFA's top job

MICHEL PLATINI LIFE AND TIMES

- Born June 21, 1955, in Joeuf
- Played for AS Joeuf, Nancy (1972-79), Saint-Etienne (1979-82) and Juventus (1982-87)
- Scored a record 41 goals in 72 games for France (1976-87), and won Euro 84 on home soil
- Won the French Cup with Nancy in 1978 and with Saint-Etienne in 1979 and 1982, and the French league title with Saint-Etienne in 1981. With Juventus, won the Italian Cup in 1983, the European Cup-winners Cup and Italian League in 1984, the European Cup in 1985 and the Italian League again in 1986
- European Footballer of the Year in 1983, 1984 and 1985
- French national team manager from 1988 to 1992
- Joint president of France's 1998 World Cup organising committee
- Joined both the UEFA and FIFA executive committees in 2002

Through the years... (left to right) under a challenge from Italy's Marco Tardelli at the 1978 World Cup; dejection after losing on penalties to West Germany in the 1982 semi-finals; celebrating his equaliser against Brazil in 1986; trophy time at the 1984 European Championship

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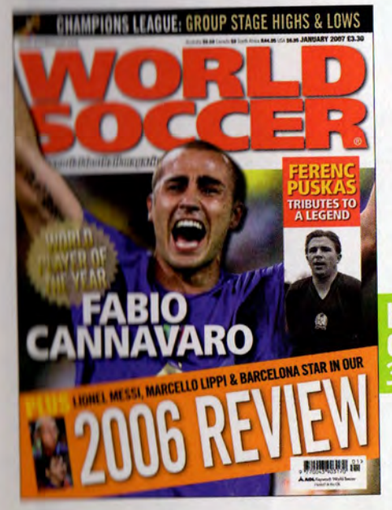

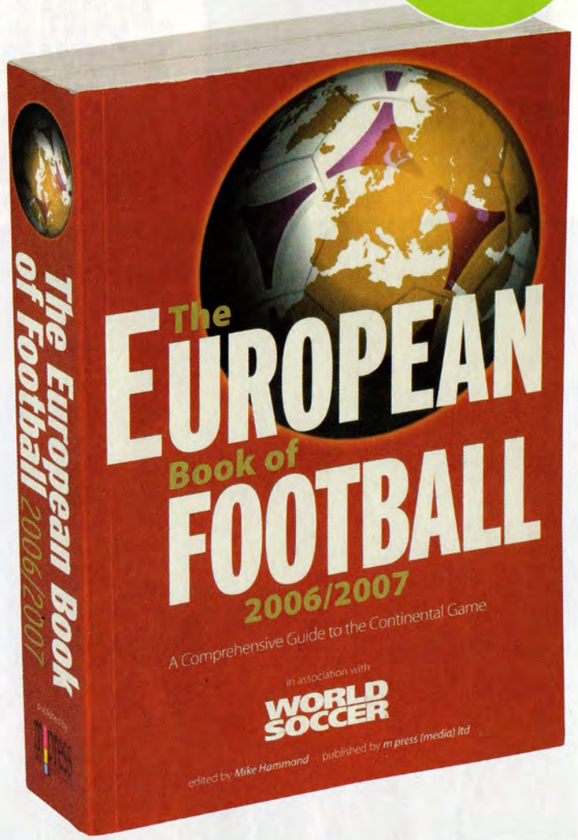

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ITALY

Calcio enters death zone

CATANIA VERSUS PALERMO was always a high-risk game. Everyone knew it. A derby between fifth and third in Serie A. The League had even moved the game forward to the night of Friday, February 2 so that security could be as tight as possible.

Tight, that is, by Italian football standards. Not tight enough to save Chief Inspector Filippo Raciti, who died in hospital after a firecracker was hurled through the window of his car as riots erupted outside Catania's stadium during the game.

Raciti was the second death in Italian football within a week and the second in top-flight European football in three months after a Paris Saint-Germain fan was shot by a plain-clothes policeman at the Parc des Princes after a UEFA Cup tie against Hapoel Tel Aviv.

Fans have been dying as a result of hooligan/ultras violence in Italian stadiums ever since 1962. The death of Raciti, a father of two, has become a cause celebre, but whether all the words of shock, regret, anger and remorse from a vast array of politicians, sports administrators and club owners will be turned into effective long-term action is in serious doubt.

Italian football is virtually beyond governance, as proved by last year's match-fixing scandal. It is a law unto itself, and the match-fixing "capture" of Juventus, Milan, Fiorentina, Lazio and Reggina may be seen as little more than headline-grabbing tokenism in a sport where corruption is considered endemic. Hooligan control is non-existent. Calcio proceeds in an era reminiscent of England in the 1970s, when the security and police authorities were complacently content for hooligan battles to be played out "at the match" because that meant contained explosions in a semi-controlled environment.

Panic stations...Catania fans flee as tear gas is fired into the crowd at the Stadio Angelo Massimino

Victim...policeman Filippo Raciti

The stadium issue is crucial. Most stadiums are municipally owned but the local authorities prefer to spend money on municipal services rather than on a sports arena, and the clubs who rent the ground refuse to pay for redevelopment because they consider that the duty of the owner.

Also, many stadiums are sited in open spaces, which provide perfect, and virtually unpoliceable, battlegrounds for rival ultras, who include a fearsome mixture of thugs and political extremists. In many ways the explosive nature of that cocktail is far more lethal than the old English version.

Many Italian observers have talked about learning the "English lessons", but the sad fact is that the English transformation to all-seater stadiums (with refined stewarding, CCTV, alcohol restrictions, banning orders and undercover infiltration of hooligan gangs) was prompted not so much by concern about hooliganism as by the tragedies at Bradford and Hillsborough.

Programmed violence

Leaked information warned the security authorities in Sicily of programmed violence being prepared by delinquent, politically-agitated hooligan groups at the Catania-Palermo game. Thus police and interior ministry officials had authorised the deployment of more than 1,500 police and other security officers ahead of the 6pm kick-off.

In mid-afternoon the scene was all quiet. The curiosity at kick-off was that the travelling Palermo ultras were not inside the stadium. Various reasons were suggested for this, principally that they had been stopped and held after being searched for weapons and missiles.

Hooded Catania fans in the Curva Sud – the south stand – threw flares as the match kicked off, but although the smoke drifted around the pitch, referee Stefano Farina decided to carry on with the game. Not until half-time, with the match still goalless, did the Palermo ultras finally begin their march into the stadium.

At 7pm Farina started the second half. Palermo scored almost immediately through Andrea Caracciolo, a goal that sparked a shower of fireworks from Catania fans in the Curva Nord. The police responded with tear gas and at 7.15, with smoke drifting across the pitch, Farina halted the match.

That was the trigger that sent Catania hooligans out of the stadium in search of their rivals. Urban war erupted behind the stands and on the surrounding streets. Police cars bringing officers to quell the trouble were attacked – including the vehicle in which Raciti was travelling. A firecracker smashed through the windscreen and he was taken to the Garibaldi hospital.

Back inside the stadium, and after a halt of 35 minutes, Farina brought the players back out on to the pitch. Catania equalised within 60 seconds through Fabio Caserta but Palermo won 2-1 courtesy of a controversial goal from David Di Michele in the 83rd minute.

In the meantime, sporadic battles raged on the streets, the chaos heightened by fleeing fans running innocently for safety from one battleground into another. More than 150 fans were injured, though police made a paltry 20 arrests.

Kicked to death

Around half an hour after the end of the game news emerged of the policeman's fate, the second football death in a week. The previous weekend Ermanno Licursi, a director of amateur league Sammartinese, had been kicked to death while trying to break up a hooligan skirmish in the southern town of Luzzi.

It had not been the only incident of the weekend. Fiorentina fans stabbed a Livorno supporter before their game in Florence, Atalanta fans battled with police guarding coaches carrying visiting Catania supporters, and a Serie D match was halted after a linesman was hit by a drum thrown from the crowd. But only the death of Licursi attracted any comment.

Ironically, a minute's silence in Licursi's memory had been staged before the Catania-Palermo game and was going to be observed at all the weekend's remaining games.

Raciti was the 13th person to be killed in or around Italy's football stadiums since 1962. The last fatality at a Serie A match was in 1995 when a Genoa fan was stabbed to death before a game against Milan.

While the amateur league tragedy provoked "only" expressions of shock and regret, the fall-out from Raciti's high-profile death – on Serie A territory – was immense.

An immediate suspension of all professional domestic football was announced by Luca Pancalli, the embattled commissioner of the Italian federation. He had been brought in to clear up the mess left by the match-fixing scandal and now found himself confronted by an even deeper crisis. The suspension applied not only to club football but also Italy's friendly against Romania, scheduled for the following Wednesday in Siena.

"We can't continue like this," Pancalli said. "Italian soccer must stop and remain stopped until we can identify the drastic and serious measures

TRAGIC TRACK RECORD

- 1962: Salernitana v Potenza (Serie C) – Gaetano Plaitano killed by a stray bullet fired by police trying to restore order after Potenza fans riot following a penalty claim rejection
- 1979: Lazio v Roma – Lazio fan Vincenzo Paparelli is killed by a flare launched from a stand containing Roma supporters
- 1984: Milan v Cremonese – Marco Fonghessi is stabbed to death after the game by fellow Milan supporter Giovanni Stefano Centrone, who mistook him for a Cremonese fan
- 1988: Inter v Ascoli – Ascoli supporter Nazzareno Filippini dies in intensive care a week after being stoned and beaten by Inter hooligans at the end of the game
- 1995: Genoa v Milan – Genoa fan Vincenzo Spagnolo is knifed to death outside the Stadio Marassi by Milan fans
- 2003: Avellino v Napoli – Napoli fan Sergio Ercolano dies in hospital two days after falling from an upper tier of the stadium while being chased by Avellino supporters

Tribute...Napoli fans remember Ercolano

OTHER INCIDENTS

- 2001: Inter fans smuggle a motor scooter into the San Siro for a match against Ascoli and then throw it from the third tier without, amazingly, injuring anyone below
- 2004: Roma's Champions League tie against Kyiv Dynamo is suspended after Swedish referee Anders Frisk is struck by an object thrown from the crowd
- 2005: Milan's Champions League quarter-final second leg against Inter is abandoned after Inter fans shower flares on Milan goalkeeper Dida

that must be taken to permit a resumption in a different atmosphere."

"I agree with Pancalli's sentiments, but one week is not enough," said Sergio Campana, president of the players' union. "It would take halting football for an entire year before anyone got the message."

United in condemnation

Everyone was united in condemnation, of course – Prime Minister Romano Prodi, who demanded urgent action from Interior Minister Giuliano Amato, and Sports Minister Giovanna Melandri said: "We must send a clear message that we must stop the kind of degeneration of sport that unfortunately happens so often."

Catania executive Pietro Lo Monaco said: "For me this is the end. I will leave the football world. I don't recognise myself in this world any more. I have loved football intensely but after this right now it seems absurd."

Palermo coach Francesco Guidolin, who blamed Catania fans, said: "We won the match but cannot enjoy this victory. Football cannot last for much longer like this. There will be no joy in it."

UEFA's new president Michel Platini weighed in with more of the usual platitudes. He linked the Italian situation with incidents involving French and Dutch fans and demanded an international anti-violence campaign, saying: "We must work together with the Italian football authorities and politicians both in support of their game and to find a solution to this spiral of violence plaguing European football."

The silliest comments came from Interior Minister Amato, who said he could no longer risk sending his police force to matches, naively conceding that football stadiums had become no-go areas; in other words, the ultras had won. To compound the nonsense, he added: "Enough is enough. Violence is everywhere but I find violence in stadiums connected to a game truly unacceptable."

The climate of ungovernable incompetence escalating around Italian football had already led to a marked drop in attendances. Fiorentina goalkeeper Sebastien Frey expected worse to follow, saying: "If we go on like this, people will not come to the stadiums at all. We are in a vicious circle."

All, apart from newspaper *La Stampa*, stopped short of demanding that Italy withdraw its bid to host the 2012 European Championship.

Keir Radnedge

Street warfare...a police vehicle comes between rioting fans

Emergency action...Palermo players try to recover from the effects of smoke bombs thrown from the terraces and police tear gas after the game was halted

Back in business

IF IT AIN'T BROKE, don't fix it. That was the message from the teams preparing for the knockout phase of the Champions League, which starts again on February 20. Few did any major transfer business during the January window, while Arsenal, Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Chelsea, Internazionale, Manchester United and Valencia all kept their chequebooks firmly closed. And the biggest name who did move, Ronaldo, to Milan, will not be eligible to play in Europe having already appeared for Real Madrid.

Barcelona v Liverpool

Defending champions Barcelona were confident that both long-term absentees – Samuel Eto'o and Lionel Messi – would be fit to start against Liverpool. The Cameroonian made a late appearance in the league match against Osasuna on February 4, while the Argentinian has been recuperating in his homeland.

Liverpool will be without Luis Garcia, who ruptured cruciate ligaments in his right knee during a league game against Arsenal and will miss the rest of the season. There was uncertainty about whether the Premier League would approve the club's signing of Argentinian midfielder Javier Mascherano from West Ham, even though FIFA said it was happy to waive international regulations that forbid players appearing for more than two clubs in any July-to-June period – Mascherano joined West Ham from Corinthians in August.

Celtic v Milan

Celtic signed keeper Mark Brown from Inverness Caledonian Thistle and full-back Jean-Joel Perrier-Doumbe from Rennes. But Scotland striker Paul Hartley and defender Steven Pressley, both signed from Hearts, are ineligible for the Champions League, having played in the qualifying rounds for the Edinburgh club. Central defender Bobo Balde is an absentee until the end of the season with a broken leg.

Milan have been struggling for goals (just 26 in 21 Serie A games) but the man bought to supply extra firepower, Ronaldo, is not eligible to play in the Champions League. Milan also signed right-back Massimo Oddo from Lazio for £5million, as well as back-up goalkeeper Marco Storari.

Internazionale v Valencia

Inter will go into the tie on the back of an incredible run of league form. Their win away to Sampdoria on January 28 was their 14th in a row, a Serie A record.

No signings in the transfer window for either club, but the injury crisis that struck Valencia in November has eased. Only Edu is out, though for the rest of the season.

Lille v Manchester United

Key Lille midfielder Mathieu Bodmer is an injury doubt after he sprained an ankle in a Ligue 1 game against Nantes.

United will be able to call upon Swedish striker Henrik Larsson for both legs under the terms of his loan deal from Helsingborgs. He is due to return to the Swedish club on March 12, a week after the second leg, but may even still be around at United after that as Helsingborgs have indicated that the loan period could be extended.

FC Porto v Chelsea

The Portuguese champions looked to South America for new recruits ahead of their meeting with Chelsea and Jose Mourinho, their former coach. Colombian striker Wason Renteria joined from Libertadores Cup holders Internacional, while Argentinian full-back Lucas Mareque arrived from River Plate.

Chelsea decided not to make any signings despite a run of injuries that exposed the vulnerability of Mourinho's slimline squad. It got even slimmer when Ashley Cole strained knee ligaments on January 31, putting his availability for the rest of the season in doubt. Joe Cole is also likely to be out until summer, but John Terry and Khalid Boulahrouz should be fit to face Porto.

PSV Eindhoven v Arsenal

The Dutch champions made only one notable signing, bringing in Chinese international left-back Sun Xiang on loan for the rest of the season. He will provide the cover previously given by Michael Ball, now at Manchester City.

Arsenal made no new additions, despite losing Robin Van Persie for the rest of the season with a broken foot. Lauren left for Portsmouth and teenager Alexandre Song went on loan to Charlton.

Real Madrid v Bayern Munich

An intriguing tie, not least because of both clubs' fragile state this season.

Real Madrid opted for youth in the transfer window, hiring a trio of South Americans – Brazilian Marcelo and Argentinians Fernando Gago and Gonzalo Higuain – for a combined total of £26million, while dispatching Ronaldo to Milan and freezing out MLS-bound David Beckham. Brazilian wing-back Cicinho is aiming for a return to action from torn knee ligaments in March, but probably not in time for the second leg against Bayern (March 7).

Bayern made no signings, despite criticism that the team have lacked midfield creativity since the sale of Michael Ballack and Ze Roberto last summer. But decisive action was taken off the pitch, with Ottmar Hitzfeld returning as coach in place of the sacked Felix Magath. Valerien Ismael remains sidelined with a broken leg.

Sidelined...new Milan recruit Ronaldo is not eligible to play in the Champions League

Roma v Lyon

Roma brought in Swedish midfielder Christian Wilhelmsson on loan from Nantes.

Lyon acquired Czech forward Milan Baros from Aston Villa, in return for Norwegian John Carew. They also signed Brazilian holding midfielder Fabio Santos from Cruzeiro. The French champions' form dipped alarmingly in January following injuries to Alou Diarra, Sylvain Wiltord and Karim Benzema.

Gavin Hamilton

Welcome back...Edgar Davids is greeted by a fan as he arrives for his first training session with Ajax

HOLLAND

Davids heads home

EDGAR DAVIDS has returned to Ajax, the club where he started his career and with whom he won the Champions League in 1995, after an unsuccessful spell at Tottenham. The midfielder, who left Ajax for Milan in 1996, failed to gain a regular starting berth at Spurs and recently had a bust-up with the club's Dutch coach, Martin Jol.

Ajax boss Henk Ten Cate, who previously worked with Davids when assistant at Barcelona, feels he could be the missing ingredient in his squad, which though talented can lack resolve.

Ajax also signed NAC Breda's Brazilian striker Leonardo, a former star of Feyenoord's youth team. Striker Markus Rosenberg has left for Werder Bremen, Ajax's next UEFA Cup opponents.

Leaders PSV Eindhoven signed two Brazilians – Alcides (Benfica) and Jonathan Reis (Atletico Mineiro) – and Chinese full-back Sun Xiang, while sending young midfielder Ismail Aissati on loan to Twente Enschede in order to get more playing time.

Vitesse Arnhem made two of the most eyecatching signings – Ecuador defender Geovanny Espinoza from LDU Quito and Serbia goalkeeper Vladimir Stojkovic from Nantes, the latter after coach Aad De Mos surprisingly offloaded first-choice Harald Wapenaar to Sparta Rotterdam.

Feyenoord now have only the League to concentrate on after being thrown out of the UEFA Cup because of the trouble caused by their fans during a group game at Nancy in November. Originally, the Rotterdam club were merely fined by UEFA, but its appeals body then increased the punishment in light of the poor behaviour of Feyenoord fans over recent years.

National coach Marco Van Basten received a boost when PSV midfielder Ibrahim Afellay said he would play for Holland, his country of birth, rather than Morocco, his parents' homeland.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

PORTUGAL

Benfica find form

FC Porto's surprise 1-0 defeat at Uniao Leiria at the end of January left them looking anxiously over their shoulder as Benfica closed the gap on the leaders to five points. The loss was compounded by the sending-off of star winger Ricardo Quaresma for violent conduct and his subsequent two-match ban.

Benfica's 2-1 win at Belenenses the following day was their fourth straight league victory, the team buoyed by the return to fitness of playmaker Rui Costa.

The club lost defender Ricardo Rocha to Tottenham and forward Francisco Fonseca to Tigres, but signed veteran Brazilian striker Derlei, who could be a key player in the second half of the season. The former Porto man, who won back-to-back league titles under Jose Mourinho before moving to Dinamo Moscow, should be an ideal addition to a front line already boasting Nuno Gomes, Simao Sabrosa and Fabrizio Miccoli.

Benfica's good run put them above Sporting Lisbon, who only drew their two January league games. The Lions' main problem has been a lack of goals, with Liedson's strikerate having fallen dramatically. The Brazilian, the League's top scorer in each of the past two seasons, hit only six goals in his first 16 matches this term. Sporting were also conspicuously quiet in the transfer market, citing a lack of funds.

Pedro Pinto

AUSTRIA

Kraft works

Tiny SV Ried, whose home town has only 11,500 inhabitants, were favourites for relegation at the start of the campaign and appeared to be well on course as they lay rock bottom after nine games.

But coach Helmut Kraft has transformed the side into contenders for a European place with a 12-match unbeaten run. At the winter break, Ried were sixth, only three points off a UEFA Cup spot.

"Our start was disastrous. Although we played well, we did not manage to score and lost vital points," Kraft says. "However, our 1:1 draw at title favourites Salzburg showed us that we can still play football and gave our confidence a massive boost."

The coach has tried to address that lack of goals – just 22 in 21 games – by signing SK Tirana forward Hamdi Salihi, the Albanian League's top scorer last season with 29.

Harry Miltner

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Shelbourne in meltdown

Three months after winning the championship for the third time in four years, financially-troubled Shelbourne have lost their manager and the majority of their first-team squad. Failure to pay the players' wages on several occasions last season meant Shels broke their contracts with the players, and consequently most were free to leave Tolka Park.

Manager Pat Fenlon is now at Derry City, while the player exodus has included captain Owen Heary and national team forward Glen Crowe to north Dublin rivals Bohemians, Jason Byrne (Cardiff City), Sean Dillon (Dundee United) and Bobby Ryan (Dunfermline).

Shelbourne have pulled out of the lucrative Setanta Cup for top sides from both sides of the border, and there are doubts about whether they will be granted a licence to compete in Europe next season. FAI Cup runners-up St Patrick's Athletic have taken Shels' Setanta Cup place.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Goodbye, Jacobacci

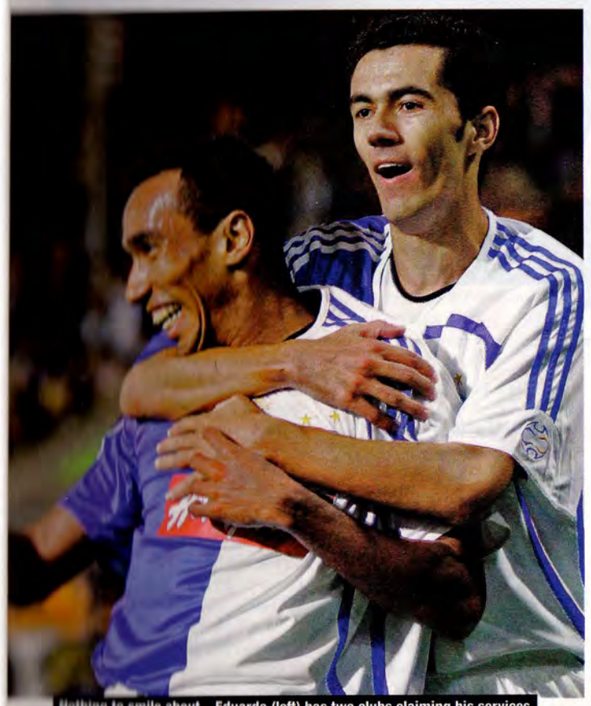
Vaduz sacked coach Maurizio Jacobacci a week into the new year despite having recently given him a contract until 2008. The club apparently had second thoughts following defeat at Wil in the last match before the winter break which left Vaduz 13 points behind leaders Kriens in the Swiss Challenge League (second tier). Jacobacci, a former Neuchatel Xamax forward, had been in charge since last April.

Eschen-Mauren have signed Liechtenstein left-back Michael Stocklasa from Vaduz and national team goalkeeper Daniel Steuble (Wil).

Graeme Crawford

SWITZERLAND

Eduardo's double trouble


Nothing to smile about...Eduardo (left) has two clubs claiming his services

GRASSHOPPER'S Brazilian striker Eduardo faces suspension after apparently signing for two clubs. On January 19, the 26-year-old agreed a two-and-a-half-year deal with French second division club Guingamp, whom he joined with immediate effect, but he had already reportedly signed a three-year deal with Koln in the German second division, to begin in July. FIFA is investigating.

National team defender Bruno Berner has joined Blackburn after failing to gain a regular starting place at Basle. "It is like having six correct numbers in the Lotto, a dream come true," he said.

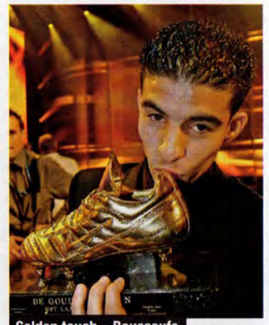
Defence was Basle's problem in the first half of the season, when they conceded 31 goals, against 22 in the same period last term. The return of defensive fulcrum Boris Smiljanic after a long injury lay-off cannot come soon enough for coach Christian Gross, who said: "We have to tighten up if we are going to make any impact when the season resumes." Basle were only fifth, 10 points behind leaders Zurich, at the winter break.

National team playmaker Hakan Yakin has signed a two-year extension at Young Boys and taken the captaincy.

Ivar von Rulach

BELGIUM

Boussoufa bonanza


Golden touch...Boussoufa

DYNAMIC ANDERLECHT star Mbark Boussoufa has continued to clean up in the individual awards, adding the 2006 Belgian Player of the Year prize, the Golden Shoe, to the Players' Player and Young Player of the Year awards he won for his performances during the 2005-06 season with Gent. The Amsterdam-born Morocco midfielder topped a poll of journalists, coaches and former players with 283 points, 82 ahead of Congolese team-mate Mohammed Tchite. Anderlecht players, in fact, took the top four places, with Argentinians Nicolas Frutos and Lucas Biglia finishing third and fourth on 111 and 74 respectively. Fifth-placed Karel Geraerts of Standard Liege (67) was the most popular Belgian player in the voting.

Boussoufa, who joined Anderlecht last summer, said: "It's a nice award but the main thing for me is to win the Belgian championship."

The 22-year-old has a fair chance of doing that, with Anderlecht having closed the gap on leaders Genk to one point after beating St Truiden 2-0 at home on the first day back after the winter break while their rivals could manage only a 2-2 draw at Zulte-Waregem. The Brussels side have been further boosted by signing Poland full-back Marcin Wasilewski from Lech Poznan.

Zulte-Waregem also lost their grip on the Cup, going out to second division Mechelen 1-0 in the last 16. Two other second level sides – Royal Antwerp and Kortrijk – also beat top-flight opposition, Lierse (4-1) and St Truiden (4-2) respectively. It is the first time in 27 years that three teams from outside the top division have reached the quarter-finals.

Nicholas Harling

SCOTLAND

McLeish gets the nod

ALEX McLEISH has been appointed national team manager in succession to Walter Smith, who opted to return to Rangers to replace Paul Le Guen. McLeish was the FA's preferred choice because of his successful spells in charge of Motherwell, Hibernian and Rangers and the fact that he did not have club commitments.

The 48-year-old won two league titles with Rangers, guided Motherwell to the runners-up spot in the 1994-95 season and led Hibernian to promotion in 1999. He also has a strong international pedigree from his playing days – he is Scotland's third most-capped player with 77 and appeared at three World Cups.

Smith, who steered Scotland to pole position in their Euro 2008 qualifying group, made defensive strengthening his priority on arriving at Ibrox, signing an experienced centre-back duo in national team stalwart David Weir from Everton and Middlesbrough's Ugo Ehiogu.

Alan Fairley

Big name...McLeish displays a special national team shirt after his appointment as manager

NORWAY

Champions on winless run

Champions Rosenborg have continued to stutter as they prepare for the new league season, their 2-2 draw in a friendly against Bodo/Glimt making it 10 games without a win since taking the title in October. However, coach Knut Torum has insisted that normality will soon return and that his side can mount a strong title defence.

Tom Nordlie saw new charges Lillestrom beat Skeid 3-0 in his first match in charge, having put the squad through a tough training programme. Simen Brenne has been signed from Fredrikstad to add bite to midfield following the departure of Robert Koren to West Bromwich.

Start boss Stig Bjornebye has lost full-back Marius Johnsen to Koln and midfielder Kristofer Haestad to Wigan but signed impressive Ghanaian midfielder Anthony Annan.

Swede Anders Gronhagen has replaced Knut Thorbjorn Eggen at the Fredrikstad helm. Gronhagen, previously in charge of Sundsvall and Djurgardens, immediately announced a switch to a 4-4-2 formation from his predecessor's favoured 4-3-3.

Brann will be without midfielder Eirik Bakke for several months after he had an ankle operation.

Sigurd Odegaard

FINLAND

'Fed up' Lehtinen retires

Ville Lehtinen has surprisingly quit the game at 28 and having just enjoyed one of the best seasons of his career, when he scored 11 goals as Tampere United won the league title.

The forward, out of contract, failed to secure a deal in England following trials at Barnsley and Leeds, and apparently felt unable to face another season in Finnish football.

"I am fed up with long hours of travelling to train and play here in Finland," said Lehtinen, who had had a 100-mile journey to Tampere from his Helsinki home. "Let's just say that I'm no longer as mad about football as I was as a kid."

Inter Turku have named Dutchman Job Dragtsma as their coach in succession to compatriot Rene Van Eck.

Pentti Hietanen

Quick farewell...Rene Meulensteen has struggled at Brondby

DENMARK

Coaching duo put families first

SUPERLIGA COACHES Rene Meulensteen and Bruce Rioch announced they were quitting their respective clubs within a fortnight of each other, both saying they wanted to spend more time with their families.

Meulensteen's departure at Brondby was instantaneous, having suffered a torrid first six months in charge as the successor to Michael Laudrup. The team are stuck in the wrong half of the table and the Dutchman was under pressure.

Brondby filled the gap by promoting youth team coach Tom Kohlert for his third spell in charge of the club he led to their first league title in 1985.

Former Middlesbrough and Arsenal manager Rioch will quit OB Odense at the end of the season after two successful years. He said: "I regret having to leave but the need to spend time with my family is the only reason for the decision. The time at OB has been one of the best of my footballing life."

His replacement will be former Denmark captain Lars Olsen, currently in charge of Randers.

Jim Holden

SWEDEN

Rosenberg looks for revival

NATIONAL TEAM forward Markus Rosenberg has moved from Ajax to Bundesliga high-fliers Werder Bremen in an effort to rekindle his career. The 24-year-old, a product of Malmo and league top scorer when on loan at Halmstads, did not do badly in Amsterdam, scoring 20 goals in 63 games. However, new coach Henk Ten Cate obviously did not rate Rosenberg, giving him only three starts in the autumn. The lack of action at club level also no doubt cost him a place in the Sweden line-up in recent months.

Helsingborgs, still uncertain about whether Henrik Larsson will return from Manchester United at the end of March as agreed, have sold Jamaican forward Luton Shelton to Sheffield United. Hammarby defender Max Von Schleebrugge has joined Anderlecht.

Sweden lost 2-0 to Venezuela and 2-1 to Ecuador then drew 1-1 in a second game against the Ecuadoreans on their South American tour. Anders Svensson, stand-in captain for the injured Niclas Alexandersson, was sent off in the latter game after a confrontation with Fernando Guerrero, who was also dismissed.

Pentti Hietanen

Bremen buy...Markus Rosenberg

ICELAND

Halla runs for president

Journalist and former player Halla Gunnarsdottir became the first woman to seek election as FA president when joining favourite Geir Thorsteinsson, the FA secretary, and businessman Jafet Olafsson in the battle to succeed Eggert Magnusson.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

All over for Ott at 22

Flora Tallinn and national team midfielder Ott Reinumae has ended his career at the age of just 22, claiming he lacked motivation. "I couldn't concentrate on training, and it's not possible to play at the top level if you cannot give 100 per cent," he said. Reinumae will stay on at Flora, however, as part of the youth team coaching staff.

Prolific Flora and Estonia forward Vjatseslav Zahhovaiko has moved to the Gulf, joining Al Kuwait on loan until July, with the option of a permanent contract.

TVMK have signed two Finland-based Estonian internationals – Liivo Leetma (KooTeePee) and Sergei Terehhov (Honka).

Andres Must

LATVIA

Laizans extends tour of Russia

International midfielder Juris Laizans has switched clubs in Russia, joining Kuban Krasnodar from CSKA Moscow. The 28-year-old has spent the past 18 months on loan at Torpedo Moscow and Rostov.

Two internationals have moved to England, Ventspils defender Kaspars Borks signing for Blackpool and Metalurgs Liepaja forward Kristaps Grebis joining Oxford United.

Andres Must

WALES

Assembly slams FA

A report by the Welsh Assembly on the state of the country's football has criticised the FA for being outdated and for poor grassroots development.

It warned that unless the situation improved, public funding for the sport could be reduced and governing powers taken away from the FA. The FA responded to the latter threat by saying that only FIFA had the authority to strip it of powers.

Few would disagree that the FA does need to make changes, but many observers have criticised the Assembly for the way it conducted the investigation.

It is accused of targeting the wrong areas, being confrontational from the outset and ignoring the fact that its support of the Welsh Premier League has been singularly lacking.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Glens lose lead

Glentoran's poor run after Christmas – four points from a possible 18 – allowed Portadown to leapfrog them at the top of the table and defending champions Linfield and Cliftonville to draw level, two points behind the leaders at the end of January.

Linfield boosted their chances of retaining the title by signing Cliftonville's creative midfielder Conor Downey, seeing off fierce competition from the other two title contenders.

Former Ards manager Shane Reddish has taken charge of bottom side Loughgall, who were still without a win after 19 games.

Roy Coyle, the Irish League's most successful manager, is taking a break from football after resigning as Newry City boss. Coyle, 60, won the League 13 times and the Irish Cup seven times with Linfield and Glentoran.

Roy Kitson

TURKEY

Besiktas reborn

Showing his claws…Marcio Nobre (right) celebrates his hat-trick with Besiktas team-mate Mehmet Sedef

BESIKTAS WERE A team transformed on the first day back after the winter break, their skilful, determined showing in the 3-1 home win over Vestel Manisaspor a dramatic improvement on their lacklustre performances of autumn. Marcio Nobre's hat-trick lifted the Istanbul side to within six points of leaders and city rivals Fenerbahce, who were held 1-1 at Erciyesspor. Galatasaray were second, a point ahead of Besiktas.

Brazil-born Nobre, now known as Mert Nobre in Turkey after taking citizenship, had scored only once in his previous 15 games for Besiktas, whom he joined from Fenerbahce last summer. But a few more performances like this and he might well find himself given a national team call-up, just like fellow Turkish-Brazilian Marco (aka Mehmet) Aurelio of Fenerbahce.

The result relieved the pressure on coach Jean Tigana, whose job was said to be on the line throughout the autumn. It will also have come as a relief to Besiktas' newly re-elected chairman, Yildirim Demiroren, especially since he had decided not to sack the Frenchman having just received his new mandate.

Suna Erdem

GREECE

Ninis off the mark at sweet 16

Sixteen-year-old Panathinaikos midfielder Sotiris Ninis became the second youngest player to score in a top division game when hitting his side's second in the 2-0 defeat of Panionios on January 27.

"I have dreamed of scoring my first professional goal," said the Albania-born youngster, who turns 17 in March. "But I know that hard work is just beginning for me and that I must continue to improve."

Thomas Mavros was a month younger than Ninis when scoring for Panionios in February 1971.

Greece coach Otto Rehhagel is reportedly keen to call up Ninis, who has the choice of playing for either his adoptive country or Albania.

Lou Economopoulos

MONTENEGRO

Bozovic quits Buducnost

Coach Miodrag Bozovic made the shock decision to quit league leaders Buducnost and join third-placed Grbalj, citing a lack of support from the club bosses. But the 40-year-old was also believed to be struggling to cope with the pressure of the title race – arch-rivals Zeta were just two points behind at the winter break – and unhappy about criticism of some recent below-par performances.

Bozovic's replacement is Branislav Milacic, who previously led Buducnost from 2003 until March last year.

Following the FA's entry to UEFA, the national team's first match will be against Hungary on March 24 in Podgorica. Zoran Filipovic, the former Red Star striker and coach, is almost certain to be handed the reins.

Vladimir Novak

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Boycott opens the door

Most national team players boycotted the first training camp under coach Fuad Muzurovic as part of their bid to force changes in the federation hierarchy. Their absence prompted the new boss to invite some unlikely figures to attend instead, including Dragan Zilic, a Serb goalkeeper at Croatian side Rijeka, and 37-year-old keeper Tomislav Piplica of Energie Cottbus in Germany.

Zdravko Reic

CROATIA

Klasnic awaits second kidney transplant

National team forward Ivan Klasnic, who requires a kidney transplant because of a long-term condition, will have to undergo a second operation with his brother Josip as the expected donor after the first, using one of his mother's kidneys, was unsuccessful. The Werder Bremen player was found to have kidney problems following an appendectomy in November 2005, though he continued to play for both club and country.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Federation chief arrested

Federation general secretary Lazar Mitrovski has been arrested for allegedly using a forged university diploma to help him obtain the position. President Haralampie Hadzi-Risteski also faced questioning by the police, who suspect that reference to the diploma has been deleted from federation records in a cover-up. Both men deny any wrongdoing.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs sealed off the federation building for several hours during its investigations, which are part of the government's wider anti-corruption drive.

Milorad Stojmanovski

Taking off…Red Star central defender Milan Bisevac has swapped Belgrade for Lens

SLOVENIA

Kek steps up

MATJAZ KEK, recently the national Under-15s and Under-16s coach, has been appointed to lead the senior side in succession to Branko Oblak. The 45-year-old coached Maribor to the league title in 2001 and 2003, having played for them in the early 1980s. His advisor is former national team coach Zdenko Verdenik, who has been working in Japan.

At club level, Pavel Pinni, who led Gorica to the last three league crowns, has taken charge of Publikum after Janez Zilnik was sacked.

Ljubljana club Factor, bottom of the table at the winter break, are to be known as FC Interblock, the name of their new sponsor. The cash injection prompted president Joze Pececnik to declare: "We will be saved from relegation and next season we will be in the race for the title."

Domzale, 14 points clear at the top, surprisingly loaned their best player, defender Branko Ilic, to Real Betis until the end of the season.

Zdravko Reic

Promotion…Matjaz Kek

SERBIA

Djukic rings the changes

AS EXPECTED, former Yugoslavia defender Miroslav Djukic succeeded Miodrag Jesic as coach of troubled Partizan Belgrade and immediately set about trimming the large squad. However, the 40-year-old, who will continue in his role as Serbia's Under-21s coach until the summer, did make three interesting signings – attacking midfielder Djordje Lazic, from Mladost Lucani, the best player in the second division during the autumn; Under-21 international right-back or right-sided midfielder Antonio Rukavina from Bezanija; and winger Zarko Lazetic (also from Bezanija), brother of former Serbia & Montenegro national team player Nikola Lazetic.

Leaders Red Star Belgrade lost defender Milan Bisevac to Lens but signed two replacements – Vladimir Djordjevic (Fluminense) and OFK Belgrade captain Milos Bajalica.

Vladimir Novak

ALBANIA

Baric seeks fresh blood

National coach Otto Baric is looking to youth to invigorate the team because he feels many of the senior players are not seeing enough action with their clubs in Serie A, the Bundesliga and other foreign leagues. "We need young blood," the veteran Croat said after arranging a training camp in Turkey to try out new squad candidates. "There are some good players in the Albanian League but not just there. We are watching with big interest some others who are playing for youth or professional teams elsewhere in Europe."

One home-based player catching Baric's eye is Sabino Plaku, 21, the League's third highest scorer with nine goals for bottom side Apolonia at the winter break.

Gezim Nushi

ISRAEL

Double blow for Haifa

Maccabi Haifa, champions for the past three seasons, dropped to seventh place after successive defeats against lowly opposition. A 1-0 loss at Hakoah Amidar/Ramat Gan was followed by an even more humiliating 4-0 home thumping by Maccabi Herzliya, leaving Haifa eight points behind leaders Beitar Jerusalem.

The champions' cause was further harmed by a four-match ban for keeper Nir Davidovich who butted Hapoel Petach Tikva's Shimon Abuhatzeira during a Toto (League) Cup match.

Second-placed Hapoel Tel Aviv dropped vital points after managing only a 0-0 draw at city rivals Maccabi.

Ori Lewis

CYPRUS

APOEL capture Kapsis

League leaders APOEL boosted their title chances by signing Euro 2004-winning defender Mihalis Kapsis from Greek champions Olympiakos. The 33-year-old, who had lost his starting place at the Piraeus club, rejected offers from clubs in Spain, Germany and elsewhere in Greece. APOEL already have three Greeks on the books – Nikos Machlas, Miltos Sapanis and Christos Kontis – and a Greek coach, Marinos Ouzounidis.

Soulis Theodosiou

MALTA

Haber adds strength

League leaders Marsaxlokk boosted their squad by signing goalkeeper Justin Haber from Belgian second division side Excelsior Virton. Malta striker Michael Mifsud has joined Coventry after a spell at Lillestrom in Norway. Valletta have lost prolific Argentinian striker Omar Sebastian Monesterolo to SC Kuwait. Nigerian Precious Monye has rejoined champions Birkirkara.

Domenico Aquilina

POLAND

FIFA says no, minister

I had to act...Sports Minister Tomasz Lipiec defends his suspension of the FA executive committee

FIFA HAS THREATENED to ban Polish teams from international competition after Sports Minister Tomasz Lipiec suspended the FA's executive committee for "not doing enough to stop corruption in domestic football".

Lipiec stepped in after the scale of the country's match-fixing scandal continued to grow. Police have arrested more than 60 players, referees, officials and coaches during an investigation that began in 2005.

The recent detention of Wit Zelazko, the FA board member responsible for referees, prompted Lipiec to call on FA chairman Michal Listkiewicz and the executive committee to step down. They refused, so the minister suspended them and appointed Premier League chief executive Andrzej Rusko as the FA's temporary commissioner until a new board is elected on March 3.

But after FIFA's threat, Rusko resigned and was replaced by the Polish Olympic Committee's Arbitration Court judge Marcin Wojcieszak.

"I know a few [executive members] supported changes in the association. But my only legal possibility was to suspend the whole committee," said Lipiec, who shrugged off the threat of a FIFA ban by saying "the probable suspension could be [only] for a short time".

Even so, the affair is likely to have ended any chance of Poland and Ukraine's joint bid to stage Euro 2012 finding success.

"Only an enemy of Euro 2012 could act in this way," was the verdict of Hryhorii Surkis, Ukraine's FA president, on Lipiec's actions.

Dariusz Kurowski

RUSSIA

Hiddink dismisses Chelsea rumours

Guus Hiddink has dismissed rumours that he is to quit as national team coach to take charge of Chelsea. The speculation has been fuelled by the fact that the Dutchman's salary is paid by Roman Abramovich, Chelsea's Russian owner, and also by Hiddink's praise of his assistant, Alexander Borodyk, in a recent newspaper interview. The former South Korea and Australia boss says he was just being complimentary about Borodyk and that his words did not indicate he planned to leave.

Champions CSKA Moscow beat city rivals and last year's league runners-up Spartak 3-2 in the Final of the lucrative Channel One Cup. The annual friendly tournament, staged in Israel, is jointly organised by Abramovich's National Academy of Football and Channel One, Russia's biggest TV company. The event also featured Ukraine's two strongest clubs – Shakhtar Donetsk, last year's winners, and Kyiv Dynamo – plus Maccabi Haifa and Hapoel Tel Aviv.

Victor Gusev

BULGARIA

Moustache v Elephants

The presidents of arch-rivals Levski and CSKA Sofia made an early start to the war of words ahead of the derby at CSKA in April that could well determine the championship.

The pair traded jibes with new CSKA chief Alexander Tomov, a former politician, saying: "There is a campaign against us. Maybe Levski are afraid, especially the one with the moustache" – a reference to Levski president Todor Batkov. The latter responded: "A couple of days before the derby we will have to close Sofia because of the elephants that will come" – meaning Indian elephants, because CSKA's new owner, Pramod Mittal, is Indian.

The duo later made up on television, but there is still plenty of bad feeling. CSKA players, for example, have been prohibited from giving interviews to the *Standart* newspaper and Bulgaria's *Don Balon* magazine because they are owned by Batkov.

Levski lead CSKA by two points at the championship's halfway stage.

Rumen Paytashev

ROMANIA

Suffering Steaua

Champions Steaua Bucharest were hit by an injury crisis ahead of their UEFA Cup clash with holders Sevilla. Playmaker Nicolae Dica is out for five months after undergoing knee surgery, while Brazilian goalkeeper Andrey Nazario, bought to replace Portuguese Carlos Fernandez, was sidelined for a month after also injuring a knee nine minutes into his first training session. Defender Mihai Nesu, midfielder Vasilica Cristocea and forward Daniel Oprita were unavailable, too.

But there was better news for Steaua with captain Mirel Radoi and striker Victoras Iacob both set for returns from long-term knee injuries.

League leaders Dinamo Bucharest, 13 points clear of Steaua at the winter break, have re-signed goalkeeper Bogdan Lobont from Fiorentina. Cameroonian striker Jeremie N'Jock has become the League's best-paid player after accepting a £990,000, three-year deal to rejoin Universitatea Craiova. The 26-year-old has been at Mons in Belgium and Brest in France in his two years away from Craiova, who are 11th, 28 points behind Dinamo.

Radu Timofte

HUNGARY

Platini a plus

Michel Platini's election as UEFA president was a boost to Hungary's joint bid with Croatia to host Euro 2012, according to FA president Istvan Kisteleki. He said: "If we had a chance to co-host up to now, this decision only strengthens it."

The Hungary-Croatia bid trailed Italy's after the first round of votes in 2005, but Platini relied on support from eastern European countries to overcome incumbent Lennart Johansson in the UEFA election and, so the theory goes, could reciprocate when it comes to Euro 2012.

However, the Frenchman has also reportedly spoken in favour of expanding the tournament to a 24-team event from the current 16, a development that could well put it outside the scope of Hungary and Croatia, who have a relatively modest infrastructure.

Peterjon Cresswell

BELARUS

Hleb wins again

Arsenal midfielder and national team captain Alexander Hleb has won the Footballer of the Year award for the fourth time in five years.

On the coaching front, former national team boss Anatoliy Baidachny has joined club side Darida, ex-Lokomotiv Minsk man Anatoly Jurevich is now at the Homel helm, Vladimir Gevorgiyan has taken charge of Dinamo Brest and Neman have sacked Vladimir Kurnev.

Oleg Zadernovsky

KAZAKHSTAN

Coaches on the move

There have been three coaching changes during the winter. Yesil Bogatyr replaced Oirat Saduov with Ukrainian Eugenie Yarovenko, formerly a youth team coach at Shakhtar Donetsk, Shakhtyor Karaganda brought in Finn Juha Malinen after sacking Swiss Andre Gusse, and experienced Russian Vladimir Linchevsky took the reins at promoted FC Zhetysu.

Keeper David Loria of champions Astana and the national team has been named Player of the Year.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Italy, here I come...Zapotocny

CZECH REPUBLIC

Udinese buy big

UDINESE SEALED THE two biggest deals in the exodus of Czech internationals during the January transfer window, snapping up defenders Tomas Sivok and Tomas Zapotocny, club captains of Sparta Prague and Slovan Liberec respectively. Among other national team players to move abroad were forward David Lafata (Jablonec to Austria Wien) and goalkeeper Marek Cech (Liberec to Luch-Energiya of Vladivostok).

The biggest deal between domestic teams involved midfielder Marek Kulic, Sparta paying Mlada Boleslav £210,000 for the speedy 31-year-old. Sparta's other big signing was 30-year-old wing-back Pavel Mares, from Zenit St Petersburg, while they sold Swiss striker Mauro Lustrinelli to Lucerne after an unsuccessful spell in Prague.

Teplice coach Vlastislav Marecek has stepped down for health reasons, but will continue to work for the club as a scout. Assistant Jiri Bartl has been promoted in his place.

Jiri Kotrba will coach relegation-threatened Marila Pribram until the end of the season, then return to Ceske Budejovice, where he spent the autumn running the youth football programme. The 48-year-old said he took the job because of his friendship with Pribram owner Jaroslav Starka, currently on remand following his arrest on murder and abduction charges. Kotrba replaces Frantisek Barat, who was able to hold the job only for six months because of a lack of coaching qualifications.

Sam Beckwith

Keep smiling...Adriaanse has high hopes of Metalurh

UKRAINE

Co goes for glory

NEW METALURH DONETSK coach Co Adriaanse arrived with all guns blazing, saying the team would win their remaining 14 league games to press for a place in Europe. "We are only eight points behind third-placed Metalist and have every chance of fighting for a UEFA Cup spot at least," the Dutchman claimed.

Metalurh have had a succession of coaches, none of whom have managed to create a team to be reckoned with despite the injection of £10million by Industrial Union of Donbass, one of Ukraine's wealthiest corporations, which has large mining, energy and engineering holdings.

But the club clearly believe Adriaanse, formerly in charge of Ajax, AZ Alkmaar and Porto, can turn their fortunes around. General director Eugenie Gaiduk says: "His methods encourage players to show their best footballing virtues and he has produced talent everywhere he has gone, including at the amazing Ajax youth academy."

Dnipro were the busiest club in the January transfer market, buying Georgia midfielder Jaba Kankava from Arsenal Kyiv and Uzbekistan defender Vitaliy Denisov and forward Sergey Samodin, both from CSKA Moscow.

Ihor Surkis, president of leaders Kyiv Dynamo, has carried out his threat to axe perceived underperformers following a miserable Champions League showing. They include Bulgarian midfielders Georgi Peev (to Amkar of Russia) and Atanas Tchipilov (Botev of Bulgaria), and ex-Ukraine defender Yuri Dmytrulin (Dinamo Minsk).

Second-placed Shakhtar have signed Ukraine Under-21 midfielder Oleksiy Polansky from Metalurh Donetsk, with Nigerian forward Emmanuel Okoduwa going the other way.

Anatoliy Volobuyev quit as head coach of struggling Zorya after just one day in charge, citing the president's interference in his team preparation plans. The new man is Olexander Kosevich, who left Kryvbas in December.

Oleg Zadernovsky

LIBERTADORES CUP PREVIEW

Brazil's treble chance

Last time round...Sao Paulo's Diego Lugano goes to ground under a challenge from Fernandao of Internacional during the 2006 Libertadores Final

THE FAVOURITES

THE LAST TWO Libertadores Cup Finals have been all-Brazilian affairs, so that country is the obvious place to look for title contenders in the 48th edition of South America's premier club competition.

Sao Paulo, semi-finalists, winners and runners-up in the past three years, have become the continent's dominant force. Last year they went down in the Final to Internacional of Porto Alegre, in many ways a smaller version of themselves. Both clubs are models of sound administration, favouring continuity over the spectacular, and their no-frills pragmatism took them past the UEFA Champions League winners to win the world club title in 2005 (Sao Paulo v Liverpool) and 2006 (Inter v Barcelona).

However, both enter this year's competition with problems. Sao Paulo have lost three stalwarts – rugged defender Fabao and midfielders Danilo and Mineiro – though coach Muricy Ramalho still has a strong squad and a number of tactical variations, all of which involve breaking forward at great speed.

Internacional will be missing outstanding centre-back Fabiano Eller and talismanic captain Fernandao for the first few games because of injuries, which will load still more demands on the 17-year-old shoulders of Alexandre Pato. Abel Braga's team will be tough to beat, but could well find that retaining the trophy is much harder than winning it the first time round.

Internacional's success turns the pressure on city rivals Gremio. After falling in the quarter-finals of the 2003 Libertadores, Gremio went to pieces and were relegated in the domestic championship. However, they made a big impression on their return to the top flight last year, with young midfielder Lucas excelling in a 4-5-1 formation. Reinforcements include veteran ex-Boca Juniors centre-back Rolando Schiavi.

Much-travelled Santos coach Wanderley Luxemburgo has never won the Libertadores but has a chance this time with a side built around the silky talents of World Cup star Ze Roberto and excellent Chilean holding midfielder Claudio Maldonado. Having overcome Blooming of Bolivia in the preliminary round, they find themselves in a relatively easy group, with Defensor of Uruguay, Colombia's Deportivo Pasto and Argentina's Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata.

The challenge from Argentina would seem to be spearheaded by River Plate. Coach Daniel Passarella has been given time to build a side, and looks to have abandoned the back-three system that left the defence so vulnerable last year. Fernando Belluschi ("worth $30 or 40million", according to Passarella) runs the midfield, and Colombian Radamel Falcao Garcia is an emerging force up front.

Boca Juniors have lost midfielder Fernando Gago to Real Madrid and suffered the turbulent, brief reign of coach Ricardo Lavolpe. The Libertadores draw has also given them two ties at dreaded altitude – against Bolivar in the Bolivian capital La Paz and Cienciano in Cusco in Peru. New boss Miguel Angel Russo is searching for a blend and needs a playmaker to serve his dangerous strikers – the old firm of Martin Palermo and Rodrigo Palacio, who have now been reinforced by the talented and experienced Bruno Marioni.

The loss of Marioni is a blow to Mexico's Toluca, one of five clubs making their debut in the competition. But a run to the semi-finals of last year's Sudamericana Cup – the continent's UEFA Cup equivalent – has given Toluca valuable experience. They have a canny coach in Americo Gallego, a defence well marshalled by Paulo Da Silva, Antonio "Zinha" Naelson buzzing in midfield, and the lively Vicente Sanchez working the flanks.

The strongest Mexican challenge, though, is likely to come from America, who reached the group stage by beating Peru's Sporting Cristal in a preliminary tie. Although they lost 4-0 to Barcelona in the Club World Cup semi-finals, they created more chances than Internacional did in their 1-0 win against the same opposition in the Final. Libertadores opponents may not be as successful as Ronaldinho and Deco in exposing America's lack of defensive pace, and with flying wing-backs and Salvador Cabanas and Cuauhtemoc Blanco leading a strong attack, they may prove hard to stop.

GOOD OUTSIDE BETS

THE OTHER MEXICAN side, Necaxa, should not be discounted. Coached by Jose Luis Trejo, who took Cruz Azul to the 2001 Final, they have a deep squad and a dangerous attacking duo in Kleber and Alfredo Moreno. Necaxa's group duels with Sao Paulo should make fascinating viewing.

Brazil's Flamengo have often been run with inept braggadocio. But last year under Ney Franco they showed signs of steady team building, and strikers Souza and Leonardo have now been signed to up the low goal tally. That said, Flamengo's group involves tricky away trips to compatriots Parana, Real Potosi of Bolivia and Venezuela's UA Maracaibo.

Last year's quarter-finalists Velez Sarsfield made it past attractive Uruguayan side Danubio in the preliminary round and will be a team to watch. The Argentinian club have a reputation for excellent youth development work, with the latest product being exciting striker Mauro Zarate. Also, coach Lavolpe is desperate to redeem himself after falling on his face with Boca.

Coming through...Velez Sarsfield players celebrate a goal during their preliminary round defeat of Danubio

Libertad of Paraguay were shock semi-finalists last year. They have since lost coach Gerardo Martino, but signed a top-class replacement in Sergio Markarian, and have retained the bulk of their squad. They should do well once more if the midfield can reproduce their dynamism of last term.

Compatriots Cerro Porteno reached the semis in 1998 and 1999, and since then have often threatened a breakthrough only to fall short. It is hard to see coach Gustavo Costas and his men going all the way this time, but if returning striker Cesar Ramirez starts hitting the mark they could pull off a surprise.

Romantics will be hoping for a good campaign from Chile's Colo Colo, who played some wonderful football under attack-minded coach Claudio Borghi on the way to the Final of last year's Sudamericana Cup. Midfielder Matias Fernandez, now with Villarreal, will prove impossible to replace, but front two Humberto Suazo and Alexis Sanchez still carry a threat that will frighten any defence.

WORTH WATCHING

EARLIER THIS DECADE Colombian sides were among the strongest contenders in the Libertadores. But the game's economic problems, and the consequent inability of the big clubs to hold on to their best players, have taken their toll. The two domestic champions last year, Deportivo Pasto and Cucuta, were both first-time winners and may find things tough in their debut Libertadores campaign. Colombia's third representatives, Tolima, look stronger, and comfortably saw off Deportivo Tachira of Venezuela in the preliminary round.

Venezuela's two qualifiers, Caracas and Maracaibo, will be anxious to show the progress they have made. Caracas in particular have an interesting side and will be disappointed not to make the second round.

Ecuador's Quito duo, El Nacional and LDU, will hope to go further, aided by the altitude of the capital. LDU appear to have gone backwards since giving Internacional a battle in last year's quarter-finals, but El Nacional, with young striker Cristhian Benitez developing well, have moved in the right direction and will be dangerous on their day.

Venezuela and Ecuador are rising forces on the club scene. In contrast, it has been some time since Uruguayan teams made an impression in the Libertadores. This year is unlikely to be different. It is hard to imagine Nacional or Defensor getting beyond the quarter-finals. But at least there is some good youth development work taking place. This year, Under-20 stars such as Diego Arismendi (Nacional) and Martin Caceres (Defensor) will acquire experience that could stand the clubs in good stead in years to come.

Tim Vickery

BRAZIL

More chaos at Corinthians

Shipped out...Gustavo Nery has left Corinthians for Zaragoza

CORINTHIANS, WHO SPENT most of 2006 flirting with relegation and saw three of their leading players depart in acrimonious circumstances, began the new year with more desertions, financial problems and an ever-increasing rift with partners Media Sports Investments.

Beleaguered coach Emerson Leao watched in disbelief as his two left-backs, Cesar and Gustavo Nery, who had been brought to the club by MSI, were whisked away one week before the start of the Paulista (Sao Paulo state) championship, to Livorno and Zaragoza respectively. Shortly afterwards, FIFA ordered the club to pay Lyon £4million for striker Nilmar, whom Corinthians insisted had been merely signed on loan. Then it leaked out the club were struggling to pay running costs, including the £1.2m monthly wage bill.

Amid all this chaos, MSI's role came under increased scrutiny. In 2004, the mysterious London-based group of investors signed a controversial 10-year deal with the club in which they agreed to finance the football department in return for a 50 per cent slice of the profits. The following year Corinthians won the national championship despite behind-the-scenes bickering. But it all fell apart in 2006 as the two sides – MSI and the Corinthians directors – effectively fought for control of the club.

Argentinian pair Carlos Tevez and Javier Mascherano walked out and were shifted by MSI to West Ham, while midfielder Carlos Alberto departed for Fluminense after a furious public row with Leao.

The coach, who ultimately saved Corinthians from relegation last year, has never hidden his disdain for MSI and Kia Joorabchian, who may or may not still be the group's president – no one really knows. The fiery former goalkeeper became involved in a public slanging match with the Iran-born businessman following the departures of Gustavo Nery and Cesar. "The man who says he is in charge of MSI is causing all these problems," Leao said. Joorabchian retorted: "Once more, Mr Leao has shown his bad conduct and his incompetence in getting on with great players...a coach should never have a bigger ego than his players."

It also appeared in January that Corinthians had been left to fend for themselves. MSI's contribution was seemingly limited to paying the wages of "their" players, such as forwards Amoroso and midfielders Magrao and Marcelo Mattos.

In an otherwise relatively quiet close season, Parana, who finished fourth in last year's Brazilian championship, appeared to move lock, stock and barrel to Palmeiras. Coach Caio Junior was first to make the switch, and then took half a dozen of his players with him. Champions Sao Paulo saw midfielder Mineiro, the key player of last season's campaign, depart for Hertha Berlin.

Romario, meanwhile, was all set to renew his never-ending quest to score 1,000 goals. The veteran forward claimed to already have 987 – although it is well known that a good number of these were scored in junior or training matches – as he rejoined Vasco da Gama for the Carioca (Rio state) championship.

But then party poopers FIFA stepped in. Romario had spent several months last year playing for Miami FC in the United Soccer Leagues, then hopped over to Australia to play four games for Adelaide United on a guest basis. In doing so, he fell foul of FIFA's rule that limits players to two clubs in any July-to-June period. Romario tried to argue Miami FC did not count as a professional club since they are outside the USA's Major League Soccer. Yet, with typical double standards, he was happy enough to add the 20 goals he scored with the club to his career total.

Brian Homewood

CHILE

Carry on, Borghi

Claudio Borghi has agreed to stay on as coach of champions Colo Colo after nearly a month of negotiations. The Argentinian has proved immensely popular after leading the club to both the opening and closing titles last year and the Sudamericana Cup Final.

Although Colo Colo have lost Latin American Player of the Year Matias Fernandez to Villarreal, they still have plenty of young talent. But Borghi criticised midfielder Arturo Vidal after his appearance at the South American Under-20 Championship, saying: "There were a lot of things I didn't like – his haircut [a Mohican], the head-butt on a Brazilian player, he got a lot of yellow cards and talked too much."

Colo Colo's two main Santiago rivals have both changed coaches, Peruvian Jose del Solar taking charge of Universidad Catolica and Argentinian Salvador Capitano coming in at Universidad de Chile, still in the throes of bankruptcy.

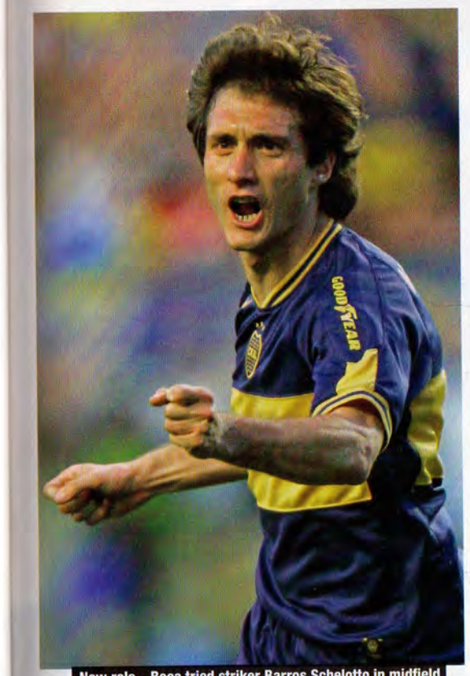
Deportes Concepcion were re-admitted to the championship less than a week before the start of the season. The club were suspended before the start of last season – though not relegated – under a ruling barring clubs who owe their players money.

Brian Homewood

ARGENTINA

Boca's missing link

THE CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP kicked off with Boca Juniors still searching for a replacement for "linking" central midfielder Fernando Gago, now at Real Madrid. Attempts to sign Leandro Gracian from Monterrey fell flat because the Mexican club wanted Neri Cardozo as part of the deal, and the Boca midfielder refused to leave despite his club's insistence and the fact that he is not a regular first-team player.


New role...Boca tried striker Barros Schelotto in midfield

The Buenos Aires side then floated the idea of repatriating former star Juan Roman Riquelme, but he did not want to return to Argentina even though he has lost his starting place at Villarreal. Finally, Boca tried using long-serving striker Guillermo Barros Schelotto in the "linking" role in some friendlies, but coach Miguel Russo was tight-lipped about how he felt the experiment had gone, saying: "I never talk about individual performances, only the team's, which is most important."

Boca have brought back one old boy – defender Clemente Rodriguez from Spartak Moscow – as well as former Estudiantes and Independiente striker Bruno Marioni from Mexican side Toluca.

Arch-rivals River Plate have also bought a retread – defender Leonardo Ponzio from Spain – but lost playmaker Marcelo Gallardo to Paris Saint-Germain. This prompted coach Daniel Passarella to say he was going to change tactics, to use a 4-4-2 formation without a playmaker, even though River have Fernando Belluschi, a potential star in that position.

Whatever happens further back, River will undoubtedly miss forward Gonzalo Higuain, who has joined Gago at Real Madrid. The club tried to sign striker Ezequiel Lavezzi from San Lorenzo, but although the latter are virtually bankrupt they refused to let him go unless they received a much higher offer, which never materialised. Lavezzi boycotted training in protest, but eventually relented and agreed to play on.

Opening champions Estudiantes sold defender Fernando Ortiz to Mexico's Santos Laguna and had to return loaned midfielder Diego Galvan to River Plate, but managed to hang on to leading scorer Hugo Pavone despite interest from Boca and a number of European clubs.

Racing Club, who have re-signed former national team winger Claudio Lopez from America of Mexico, have made a novel offer to new season-ticket buyers – a part-refund if the team finish outside the top five. Purchasers will receive 25 per cent of the cost price for places six to 10, 50 per cent for 11th to 15th and 75 per cent for 16th to 19th. They will get the lot back if Racing finish bottom.

Eric Weil

BOLIVIA

Coach pays for hitting fans

Mauricio Soria was fired as coach of champions Jorge Wilstermann after wading into the crowd and hitting a number of supporters during a pre-season friendly against the national Under-17s. Soria lost his rag as Wilstermann fans began jeering their team. The coach then ordered his side off the field and the match was abandoned in the 23rd minute.

The pre-season Copa Aerosur was marred by the death of a 35-year-old woman, who was trampled in a crush at one of the gates before the derby between Bolivar and The Strongest.

Brian Homewood

HONDURAS

Rueda takes the reins

Former Colombia coach Reinaldo Rueda has taken charge of the underachieving national team, in succession to Jose de la Paz Herrera. Honduras stunned the world by beating Luiz Felipe Scolari's Brazil at the 2001 Copa America and reaching the semi-finals. However, they failed to reach either of the last two World Cups.

Rueda almost steered Colombia to Germany 2006 after picking up the pieces from their disastrous start in the qualifiers under Francisco Maturana.

Brian Homewood

CANADA

Toronto add firepower

Toronto FC have signed forwards Alecko Eskandarian from DC United and Togo youth international Abdoulaye Ibrahim from New York Red Bulls ahead of the club's debut in Major League Soccer.

Los Angeles Galaxy's signing of David Beckham appeared to have a positive effect on season ticket sales at Toronto. They shifted 2,600 in the week after the announcement of the former England captain's arrival in MLS, bringing the total to 10,000 sold – half the capacity of Toronto's new BMO Field stadium.

Philippe Germain

Choosing colours...Nery Castillo

MEXICO

Castillo coup

HUGO SANCHEZ pulled off the first coup of his reign as national coach by persuading Olympiakos striker Nery Castillo to play for the team. The 22-year-old had been at the centre of a three-way tug-of-war, with Greece and Uruguay also chasing his services. Castillo was born in Mexico but raised in his parents' homeland, Uruguay, beginning his career with Montevideo side Danubio at 15. He moved to Olympiakos a year later, and his long residency in Greece gave him the option to play for their national team, too.

Sanchez called up the youngster to face the United States in a friendly and also recalled gifted but volatile forward Cuauhtemoc Blanco, who won only nine caps in four years under previous coach Ricardo Lavolpe and was left out of the World Cup squad.

Two of Mexico's top forwards, Jared Borgetti and Francisco Fonseca, have returned home after unfruitful spells in Europe. Borgetti, the country's all-time leading scorer with 38 goals, has joined Cruz Azul from Bolton; Fonseca signed for Tigres after a mere six months at Benfica.

In the biggest move of January, Mexico goalkeeper Oswaldo Sanchez surprisingly left opening champions Guadalajara for Santos Laguna, who also signed two Argentinians – forward Matias Vuoso from America and midfielder Daniel Luduena (Tecos UAG).

Brian Homewood

Keeping hold of it...Singapore celebrate their second successive ASEAN Championship triumph

ASEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Singapore shine

SINGAPORE LEFT THE four co-hosts of this year's Asian Cup finals in the shade as they retained the ASEAN Championship, the tournament for members of the South-east Asian federation. Raddy Avramovic's team, who did not qualify for the continent's major international event this July, beat Thailand 3-2 on aggregate in the Final and also bested all the other Asian Cup co-hosts – Malaysia in the semi-finals, 5-4 on penalties after a 2-2 aggregate draw, and Vietnam and Indonesia in the group stage.

The first leg of the Final, in Singapore, almost descended into farce in the dying minutes with the score at 1-1 when Malaysian referee Chappanimutu Ravichandran awarded a questionable penalty to Singapore and the Thais walked off the field. However, they were persuaded to return some 15 minutes later, and Mustafic Fahruddin converted the spot-kick to give Singapore victory.

The Thais appeared to be on their way to an away goals victory after Pipat Thonkanya had given them the lead in the 37th minute of the return in Bangkok. But Khairul Amri hit back with a stunning right-foot shot nine minutes from full-time. "Amri scored a beautiful goal," Avramovic said. "It was one of the best I have seen and deserving to win the final of a championship."

Indonesia and Thailand will both begin their run-in to the Asian Cup under new management. Englishman Peter Withe was replaced by Bulgarian Ivan Kolev after Indonesia failed to progress from Group B. Thailand's Chanvit Polchivin announced he was preparing to take the reins at Vietnamese club side Dong Tham.

Vietnam, who lost 2-0 on aggregate to Thailand in the semi-finals, could also be forced to look for a new coach since Austrian Alfred Riedl has been given an extended leave of absence after undergoing a kidney transplant in Europe.

Michael Church

AUSTRALIA

Jets fly high

Newcastle Jets completed a remarkable comeback when surging into the A-League play-offs in third place after beating top side Melbourne Victory 4-0 on the final weekend of the regular season. The Novocastrians had been bottom a third of the way through the 21-game programme. The turning point was the replacement of coach Nick Theodorakopoulos with assistant Gary Van Egmond, who steered Jets to take 27 points from their last 14 games.

The team, which includes several promising Australian youngsters such as Jade North and Joel Griffiths, finished 15 points behind Victory and three behind Adelaide United. Defending champions Sydney FC took the fourth play-off berth.

Paul Moon

GULF CUP

The Metsu and Matar show

BRUNO METSU continued his Middle East success story by taking the United Arab Emirates to their first Gulf Cup title with a 1-0 defeat of Oman in the Final. Ismail Matar's 72nd-minute goal meant the Frenchman added the trophy to the Asian Champions League title and UAE league championship he won with Al Ain and the Qatari league title with Al Gharafa since moving to the region in 2002.

Matar also scored the only goal of the semi-final against Saudi Arabia, in the final minute. "Ismail is a fabulous player," Metsu said after the Final. "He can surely play in Europe, which would be great for him and the country."

The trophy is a major boost for the Emirates ahead of the Asian Cup, in which they face holders Japan, recent Asian Games winners Qatar and co-hosts Vietnam in Group B. The Qataris were quickly brought down to earth after their success of December, finishing bottom of their group.

Bahrain dispensed with coach Hans-Peter Briegel after his side lost 2-1 to Saudi Arabia in their first group game. However, the team recovered to reach the semi-finals, when they lost 1-0 to Milan Macala's Omanis.

Michael Church

Air force...Metsu is chaired after the Final

Champion move...international Yuki Abe was Urawa Reds' one notable signing

JAPAN

Osieck holds steady at Reds

LAST SEASON'S Double winners Urawa Reds made only one major signing – JEF United skipper Yuki Abe – ahead of the league kick-off in early March, suggesting that new coach Holger Osieck believes if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Abe is a versatile player, having appeared mostly in midfield at JEF but operating in defence for the national team.

Shimizu S-Pulse, last year's most improved team, have signed former Espanyol and Bolton striker Akinori Nishizawa from relegated Cerezo Osaka. The 30-year-old was born and raised in Shimizu and, having never played for the local club, always said that he wanted to end his career with them. He opened his welcoming press conference with a cheery: "I'm home!"

FC Tokyo have signed well-travelled Costa Rican striker Paulo Wanchope from Rosario Central in Argentina and international midfielder Takashi Fukunishi from Jubilo Iwata. Fukunishi has not played for Japan since coach Zico was replaced by Ivica Osim, but produced some exciting performances wide on the left of midfield for Jubilo last year instead of in his more usual central role.

Yokohama F Marinos have had a clear-out of former internationals, with Eisuke Nakanishi, Takashi Hirano, Daisuke Oku and Tatsuhiko Kubo all departing, the latter two to newly-promoted Yokohama FC. Meanwhile, Marinos have signed 2002 World Cup forward Takayuki Suzuki from Red Star Belgrade.

Hiroshi Hayano, the manager who led Marinos to their first league championship in 1995, has returned to the helm in place of caretaker manager Takashi Mizunuma, who reverts to his previous role as coach.

Kashima Antlers have appointed Oswaldo Oliveira from Cruzeiro to replace fellow Brazilian Paulo Autuori. The successor to Toshiya Miura at Omiya Ardija is Dutchman Robert Verbeek, who previously led PSV Eindhoven's Under-19s and Singapore's Under-16s. Verbeek's elder brother Pim also coached Omiya Ardija, in the late 1990s.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

ROUND-UP

ASIA

● UZBEKISTAN'S Pakhtakor won the CIS Champions Cup for the first time when beating Latvia's Ventspils 9-8 on penalties in the Final after a goalless draw. The annual tournament is for the champion clubs of all the former Soviet republics. Russian Valeriy Nepomniyaschyi has been sacked as Uzbekistan's national team coach despite having led them to the Asian Cup finals. The federation gave no reason for the decision. His replacement is Under-23 boss Rauf Ineleev.

● Regar-Tadaz midfielder Khurshed Makhmudov was named Player of the Year in TAJIKISTAN for the second time in a row following his club's championship success.

Oleg Zadernovsky

OCEANIA

● NEW ZEALAND league leaders Waitakere United went four points clear of title rivals Youngheart Manawatu when beating them 2-0 on January 6. Veteran goalkeeper Michael Utting was man of the match, making a string of superb saves. Danko Koprovcic and Daniel Ellensohn scored the goals. Defending champions Auckland City are still in contention, too, lying six points behind United but with a game in hand after also beating Manawatu, 5-3. United and City drew 2-2 in their Oceania Champions League Group A clash. United beat New Caledonian hosts Mont Dore 2-0 in the tournament's opening game.

● Dragon were six points ahead of Temanava in the TAHITIAN League, with reigning champions Pirae a further three points back despite their striker Naea Bennett averaging over a goal a game.

Paul Moon

Courting in vain

Timed out...Carlton Cole is two years too old to switch allegiance to Nigeria

A NUMBER OF African federations apparently do not understand the rules governing players switching international allegiance having courted Europe-based professionals who will not be allowed to play for them.

In 2005, FIFA ruled that players previously capped at junior international level and entitled to dual nationality are allowed to change their allegiance, on condition that they have not played at full international level and are under the age of 21.

This rules out two of the latest high-profile Europe-based players linked with possible international careers in Africa.

Former Holland Under-20 midfielder Kiki Musampa has been assiduously courted by the Democratic Republic of Congo, the country where he was born, but at 29 is well past the age limit for any switch. Musampa, who plays in Turkey for Trabzonspor and whose other clubs have included Manchester City, Atletico Madrid and Ajax, was a member of the Dutch Under-20 side that competed at the 1995 World Youth Cup in Qatar.

He has been holding talks with DR Congo's Belgian coach Henri Depireux and agreed to commit himself to the Congolese side, but neither Musampa nor Depireux seem aware he is ineligible.

This is also the case with West Ham striker Carlton Cole, who has been courted by Nigeria. His parents hail from Sierra Leone and Nigeria's Rivers State but the Surrey-born player has competed for England's Under-21 team and now, at the age of 23, can no longer seek to switch.

Both Cole and Musampa have given extensive interviews recently about their decision to seek new vistas in Africa, having lost hope of being capped by England and Holland respectively. They were discussions in which both players and interviewers were blissfully ignorant of the regulations.

Congo made the same mistake with Aziz Makukula, the Portuguese junior international, ahead of their appearance at last year's African Nations Cup finals, going as far as to bring him into the pre-tournament training camp before finding out he was ineligible.

FIFA introduced the possibility of making the switch in international allegiance in late 2005, which proved a major boon for African football. Previously players capped even at Under-17 level by one country could not later play for another.

Mark Gleeson

ROUND-UP

● Arie Haan has quit as CAMEROON coach after just six months. The Dutchman was strongly critical of what he perceived to be maladministration within the federation. Club side Canon Yaounde have signed two Brazilian strikers – Washington dos Santos from Mineiro and Godofredo Netto from Fluminense.

● EGYPT'S ENPPI have appointed former national team captain Hani Ramzi as coach after firing German Rainer Zobel.

● French coach Henri Stambouli has left MOROCCO'S FAR Rabat, runners-up in last year's African Confederation Cup. Hassania Agadir have appointed Argentinian coach Miguel Gamondi, Romanian Eugene Moldovan has taken charge at Omnisport Meknes, and Diffa El Jadida are now under Frenchman Jean-Christian Lang.

● Rabah Saadane, who took ALGERIA to the 1986 World Cup, is the new coach of Entente Setif.

● Abubaker Bani quit as LIBYA coach, citing a lack of help from the federation in organising warm-up games for the resumption of the African Nations Cup qualifiers. His replacement is Mohamed Selimi.

● In TUNISIA, Brazil's Paolo Rubim was fired by struggling CA Bizerte and replaced by Mokhtar Tlili.

● MTL Wanderers have won the MALAWIAN title to end the seven-year reign of neighbours Big Bullets.

● Former Sporting Lisbon coach Manuel Fernandes has taken charge of ANGOLA'S AS Aviacao on a three-year contract.

● Belgian Maurice Cooreman, who led Ocean Boys to the NIGERIAN championship last season, has moved to former African champions Enyimba. Tunde Disu and Samson Siasia, both former coaches of national youth teams, have taken Cooreman's place. Okey Emordi, who won the Champions League with Enyimba in 2004, is now in charge at Rangers International.

Rabat exit...Stambouli

● BENIN have replaced national coach Codjo Edme with Frenchman Didier Notheaux.

● Hearts of Oak refused to represent GHANA in the African Confederation Cup in protest at losing out on a Champions League berth following a ruling by the Ghanaian FA. Liberty Professionals also pulled out for financial reasons.

Mark Gleeson

Living in hope...the Kosovo squad look forward to the day their federation is accepted into the UEFA fold

Kosovo prepares for entry

KOSOVO IS APPARENTLY on the road to becoming an independent country and gaining entry to the United Nations, raising the possibility of its football federation, the FFK, being admitted to the UEFA fold. That in turn could lead to a swathe of leading Kosovo-born players switching allegiance from the Albanian national team.

A UEFA spokesperson said recently: "UEFA has had some contacts with the Kosovo federation. If Kosovo meets all criteria to become a UEFA member and if a hypothetical application for membership is accepted by the UEFA congress, the players who have played for the national team of Albania would be able to choose which country they would like to represent."

These players include Marseille midfielder Lorik Cana, Lokeren midfielder Besnik Hasi, Anorthosis Famagusta goalkeeper Arjan Beqaj, Vorskla defensive duo Debatik Curri and Armend Dallku, Eintracht Braunschweig forward Bekim Kastrati and Hamburg forward Besart Berisha.

Kosovo has a population of around two million, an estimated 88 per cent of whom are ethnic Albanians. The region is in political limbo at present, having been run as a UN protectorate since 1999, when NATO intervention ended fighting between forces from Serbia (of which Kosovo is still a province) and the Kosovo Liberation Army. One of UEFA's main entry criteria is that applicant federations must represent a UN-recognised independent state.

Although none of the players mentioned are certain to switch teams, Kosovo do already have a coach on board. Edmund Rogova, who left a post in the United States to take up the position, played as a forward in the Yugoslav first division for Kosovan side Pristina until 1984, when he left for New York Cosmos and later Kansas City Comets.

The home-based Kosovo representative team have played very few games to date. Last year's only home match, in the capital Pristina, was a 3-3 draw against a side of expat Kosovans, watched by a crowd of 15,000. Kosovo's only other game last year was a 7-1 win against Monaco's amateur selection in the principality.

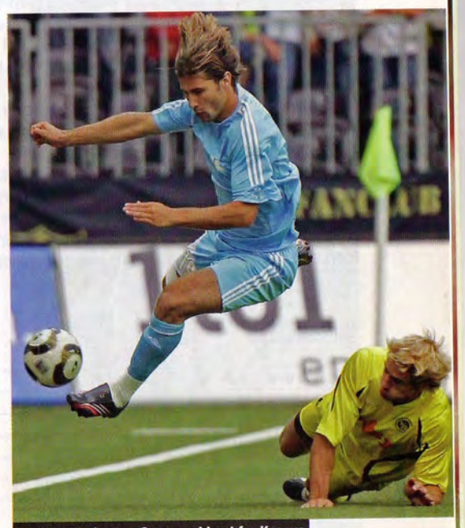
Three-team tournament

In 2005, Kosovo visited North Cyprus to play in a three-team tournament of non-FIFA-affiliated sides. They lost 1-0 to the hosts but beat Laplanders Sapmi 4-1. Last year, however, the Kosovans rejected an offer to return to North Cyprus to play in the ELF Cup, another tournament for non-FIFA sides.

"The FFK didn't think it was a good time to go there because, having made contact with UEFA, they didn't want to play against a country who are not members of UEFA," says Afrim Toverlani, a Kosovan who represented Yugoslavia at youth level. "The FFK doesn't want to be a member of the non-FIFA 'nations' because this year we are waiting for the status of Kosovo to be decided and then to apply for membership of UEFA and FIFA."

Toverlani also played for Pristina in the old Yugoslav first division and now coaches the under-19 side at his old club. Formed in 1922, Pristina are still the biggest club in Kosovo and went into 2007 on top of the FFK's Super League, which, like the two divisions below, is amateur.

Steve Menary


Making the jump...Cana could opt for Kosovo

TALENT SCOUT

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Abdelkader KEITA

Lille's virtuoso attacker with Man United in his sights

LILLE DO NOT NORMALLY spend heavily on new recruits, let alone on players with chequered pasts. So they went against type when signing Ivorian attacker Abdelkader Keita from Qatari side Al Sadd for a club record £2.1million in summer 2005.

Keita appeared to be the antithesis of the solid, reliable pro preferred by Lille coach Claude Puel. The Ivorian had shown himself to be a virtuoso dribbler and speedster during his time in the Gulf and with Africa Sports of Abidjan and Etoile Sahel in Tunisia, but also he had been notoriously inconsistent, too much a soloist, an inveterate partygoer and, at Al Sadd at least, liable to skip training whenever the mood took him.

Those who said Puel had wasted Lille's money were vindicated at first. Keita struggled to come to terms with the demands of European football and barely featured in the first team during his first five months at the club.

"Keita found it really tough to begin with," Puel admits. "While he was a big star in Qatar, here he was nobody. Even with the reserves he was not effective. When he went forward he wouldn't look up, his play was muddled, tactically he had a lot of work to do. Frankly, we had no guarantee that he would make it with us. It was a crazy gamble, but what ultimately saved our investment was that he was always willing to learn and stayed modest."

The tide started to turn for Keita just before Christmas 2005. Lille's other Africans – Senegal keeper Tony Sylva, Cameroon midfielder Jean Makoun and Nigerian striker Peter Odemwingie – had gone out of their way to help the Ivorian adapt to his new environment, and Puel noted his increased commitment on the training ground. The coach decided to play Keita in a league game away to champions Lyon, and it would turn out to be a career-changing 90 minutes as the forward's masterclass on the right flank laid the foundations for the visitors' shock 3-1 win.

Since then, he has hardly put a foot wrong, playing a key role as Lille finished third in France last season, appearing for Ivory Coast at the World Cup and performing excellently in both Ligue 1 and the Champions League this term. Manchester United are the next challenge, in the Champions League first knockout round.

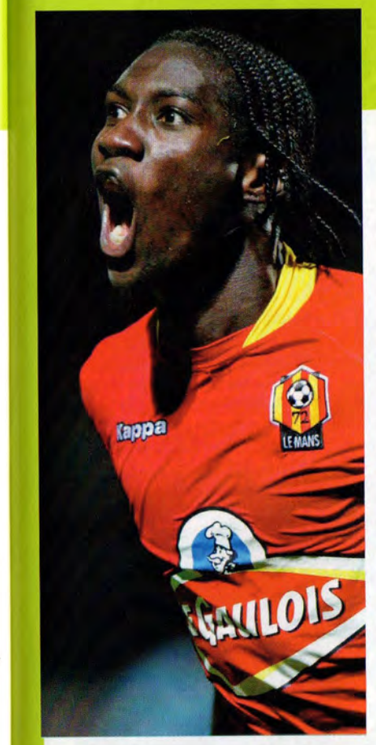
So much for a player once regarded as too hot to handle. Milan, Internazionale and a host of Premiership big-hitters would all love trouble like Keita.

"You must take care when dealing with Kader because he does have a tendency to take things casually," says former Ivory Coast assistant coach Gerard Gili. "However, he has come across the ideal man to guide him in Claude Puel. He has moulded him into a real professional, while leaving his natural technical qualities and exuberance untouched."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

- **Club** Lille (Fra)
- **Country** Ivory Coast
- **Born** August 6, 1982, in Gagnoa
- **Previous clubs** Africa Sports, Etoile Sahel (Tun), Al Sadd (Qat)
- **International debut** June 2000, v Tunisia
- **International caps** 38 (9 goals)
- **Honours** African Cup-winners Cup 1999 (Africa Sports); Qatari League 2004; Qatari Cup 2003, 2005



Ismail BANGOURA

Trigger-happy Guinean firing them in for Le Mans

AT NEW YEAR, Le Mans' Guinean forward Ismail Bangoura was the surprise name among the leading scorers in the French League, his eight goals highlighting how well he had adapted to life in the top flight after a difficult start.

Last season Conakry-born Bangoura managed just six goals for Le Mans, having made his debut only in the November after failing to impress in training. However, he did score in that first game, a 3-0 home league win over Marseille, and it was on the strength of that performance that Guinea's then national coach, Patrice Neveu, handed the youngster his first cap, in a friendly against Togo. He also included Bangoura in his squad for the African Nations Cup finals soon afterwards, and the forward made two starts as the team reached the quarter-finals.

"I thought he was man of the match [against Marseille]," Neveu said. "His workrate is impressive, but his biggest strengths are his speed and power. He can do things so much quicker than normal players." It was Neveu who gave Bangoura his nickname – "The Trigger" – because of the speed with which he gets his shots away.

Bangoura arrived at Le Mans in summer 2005 after scoring 13 goals in 2004-05 for third level Corsican club Gazelec Ajaccio. His move to French football came after being spotted playing in Guinea's second division for Atletico Colere by the national boxing coach, Dominique Ciccada, a Corsican, who tipped off his brother, Philippe, a Gazelec official.

Bangoura's success last autumn has prompted him to raise his sights from his pre-season target of 10 goals. "After a little reflection I have wondered, why not 20 or 30?" he says. "It can be done if I get the chances."

Mark Gleeson

FACT FILE

- **Club** Le Mans (Fra)
- **Country** Guinea
- **Born** January 2, 1985, in Conakry
- **Previous clubs** Atletico Colere, Gazelec Ajaccio (Fra)
- **International debut** January 2006, v Togo
- **International caps** 5

NALDO

Brazilian giant in hot form at Bremen

BEFORE THE ARRIVAL of central defensive rampart Naldo in summer 2005, current Bundesliga title chasers Werder Bremen had never had much luck with Brazilians. A decade ago talented but volatile stopper Junior Baiano quit the Weserstadion after just a year, claiming on departure that the northern city was the "coldest place on earth".

Naldo, a £2million buy from Rio Grande do Sul club Juventude, has proved altogether more adaptable. The 24-year-old has been the model recruit, showing level-headedness and a good work ethic.

He was mightily impressive for Werder last season, but has taken his form to an even higher plane this term. His height gives him aerial superiority, he has enough speed to keep up with the nippiest striker, he reads the game expertly and times his tackles to perfection.

Naldo has also proved his worth at the other end of the pitch, where his heading ability and cannonball set-piece shooting come into their own. He has already scored six goals this season, including an amazing hat-trick in a 6-2 win at Eintracht Frankfurt in December.

"Naldo has just been in incredible form this season," says midfield team-mate Tim Borowski. "It's crazy how good he is."

The mystery is why he has not yet appeared for Brazil. "Unfortunately, my name doesn't mean as much back home as it does in Germany," Naldo says. "However, I'm convinced my good displays in the Bundesliga will eventually win over coach Dunga. I'm not going to sulk. The only strategy is to deliver for your club."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

- **Club** Werder Bremen (Ger)
- **Country** Brazil
- **Born** September 10, 1982, in Londrina
- **Previous clubs** Alvorada, Juventude

10 TO WATCH

Tim Vickery selects the most eye-catching players from the South American Under-20 Championship

The intense summer heat and the programme of nine games in three weeks took their toll on teams at the tournament in Paraguay in January but, as always, there was plenty of individual talent on show. Brazil's Alexandre Pato, who was profiled in our Class of 2007 feature last month, confirmed his class, as did Alexis Sanchez of Chile, who will appear in Talent Scout next month.

Ever Banega

Ever BANEGA
(Argentina)
29.06.88. Boca Juniors
Illuminated Argentina's midfield with the clarity of his passing and thinking. Uncannily similar in style to his mentor, former club-mate Fernando Gago. Strong in possession, always available, constantly generating ideas with his precise distribution and intelligent movement, Banega is just the type of player who should be allowed to develop in South American football.

CASSIO
(Brazil)
06.06.87. Gremio
Best goalkeeper at the tournament having been called up only at the last moment after the original first choice failed a drug test and the second choice was injured. Cassio had some awful centre-backs in front of him, but came to Brazil's rescue on their run to win the championship, filling the goal with his giant, spidery frame.

LUCAS
(Brazil)
09.01.87. Gremio
At last Brazil have unearthed a natural central midfielder who, as well as carrying out his defensive duties, also makes a big attacking contribution. Powerful, giant, blond figure who times his forward runs well. Scored four goals, one from a blistering shot, the others after

Arturo Vidal

arriving unmarked at the far post. Passes well, so maybe could do more to dictate the rhythm of the game.

Arturo VIDAL
(Chile)
22.05.87. Colo Colo
The rock at the heart of the Chilean team. The tall central midfielder, who also filled in in defence, was competitive, tactically astute and hit six goals – the tournament's second highest tally – courtesy of his booming right-foot shot, towering aerial ability and coolness under pressure from the penalty spot. Rewarded with senior squad call-up.

Matias VIDANGOSSY
(Chile)
25.05.87. Union Espanola
Twinkle-toed attacking midfielder whose bright work down the flanks was crucial to Chile's counter-attacking gameplan. Has terrific skill in tight spaces, but there's room for improvement – he struggled when the ball was not played to his feet and lacked calmness when finishing.

Juan Pablo PINO
(Colombia)
30.03.87. Monaco (Fra)
Tall, hugely talented No 10 who loves to turn and go on surging runs, is full of tricks, has a right foot that can be both vicious and delicate, and a cannon in his left. But he will need careful guidance since he is often lackadaisical and selfish. Has just joined Monaco from Independiente Medellin but the move to Europe may well have come too soon.

Nery BAREIRO
(Paraguay)
03.03.88. Libertad
Big, uncomplicated centre-back who captained the hosts and commanded

Nery Bareiro

their defensive line. Dealt well with the aerial threat and was especially impressive on the ground in one-on-one situations, when he kept his balance and was rarely beaten. His distribution needs improvement.

Luis CACERES
(Paraguay)
16.04.88. Sport Colombia
Busy midfielder who never hid, no matter how badly things were going. Highly versatile – he figured as an attacking midfielder, in the holding role and as a wing-back – and scored a glorious volley on the run in the first meeting with Brazil.

Martin Caceres

Martin CACERES
(Uruguay)
07.04.87. Defensor
The best centre-back at the tournament. Had occasional problems against the more physically powerful strikers, but looks quick and hard, good in the air and excellent on the ground. Also has strong leadership qualities and is proficient at bringing the ball out of defence. Set to join Villarreal in July.

Edinson CAVANI
(Uruguay)
14.02.87. Danubio
Tall, strong, imperious striker who was tournament top scorer with seven goals. Finishes well with either foot and in the air, turns sharply and links the play well. Worked astonishingly hard, as required by Uruguay's 4-3-3 system. The abiding memory is from the closing stages of the penultimate match, when he raced the entire length of the pitch to break up a Chilean counter-attack.

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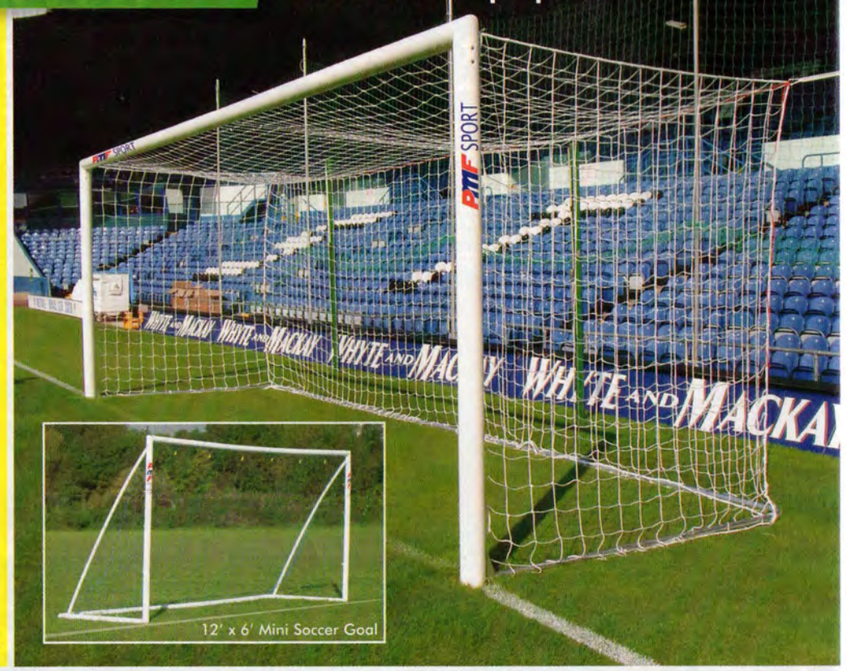

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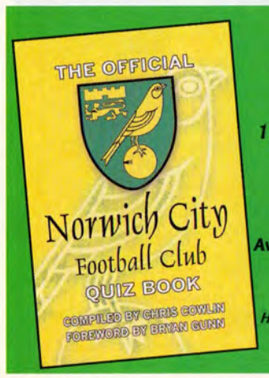

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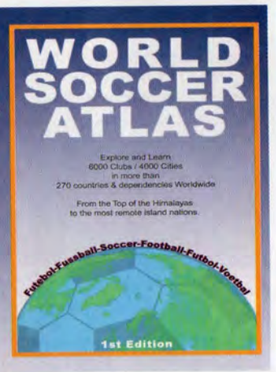

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INTERNATIONALS

ASEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Group A
In Bangkok

Jan 12
Thailand 1 (Suchao 90)
Myanmar 1 (Si Thu Win 25)
HT: 0-1

Jan 12
Malaysia 4 (Hairuddin 8, 80, Nizaruddin 16, Del Rosario og 70)
Philippines 0
HT: 2-0

Jan 14
Thailand 4 (Sarayoot 15, 30, Pipat 21, Natthapong 82)
Philippines 0
HT: 3-0

Jan 14
Malaysia 0
Myanmar 0

Jan 16
Myanmar 0
Philippines 0

Jan 16
Thailand 1 (Sarayoot 47)
Malaysia 0
HT: 0-0

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Thailand	3	2	1	0	6	1	7
Malaysia	3	1	1	1	4	1	4
Myanmar	3	0	3	0	1	1	3
Philippines	3	0	1	2	0	8	1

Group B
In Singapore

Jan 13
Indonesia 3 (Atep 51, 74, Saktiawan 67)
Laos 1 (Sounthalay 13)
HT: 0-1

Singapore 0
Vietnam 0

Jan 15
Vietnam 1 (Supardi og 32)
Indonesia 1 (Saktiawan 90)
HT: 1-0

Jan 15
Singapore 11 (Mohd 10, Noh Alam Shah 11, 24, 60, 72, 76, 88, 90, Ishak 47, Amri 71, Dickson 78)
Laos 0
HT: 3-0

Jan 17
Vietnam 9 (Le Cong Vinh 1, 28, 58, Phan Thanh Binh 29, pen 73, 81, 84, Nguyen Van Bien 45, 90)
Laos 0
HT: 4-0

Jan 17
Singapore 2 (Noh Alam Shah pen 10, Indra Daud 52)
Indonesia 2 (Ilham Jaya 26, Zainal 56)
HT: 1-1

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Singapore	3	1	2	0	13	2	5
Vietnam	3	1	2	0	10	1	5
Indonesia	3	1	2	0	6	4	5
Laos	3	0	0	3	1	23	0

Semi-finals, 1st legs
Jan 23 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 1 (Hardi 57)
Singapore 1 (Noh Alam Shah 73)
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Iskandar (Singapore) 90min

Jan 24 - Hanoi
Vietnam 0
Thailand 2 (Datsakorn 28, Pipat 81)
HT: 0-1

Semi-finals, 2nd legs
Jan 27 - Singapore
Singapore 1 (Ridhuan 75)
Malaysia 1 (Eddy 57)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1
Agg 2-2. Singapore 5-4 on pens

Jan 28 - Bangkok
Thailand 0
Vietnam 0
Thailand 2-0 on agg

Final, 1st leg
Jan 31 - Singapore
Singapore 2 (Noh Alam Shah 17, Fahruddin pen 83)
Thailand 1 (Pipat 50)
HT: 1-0

Final, 2nd leg
Feb 4 - Bangkok
Thailand 1 (Pipat 37)
Singapore 1 (Amri 81)
HT: 1-0
Singapore 3-2 on agg

GULF CUP

In Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Group A
Jan 17
United Arab Emirates 1 (Matar 63)
Oman 2 (Basheer 37, Al-Hawsani 50)
HT: 0-1
Sent off: Saeed (UAE) 26min

Jan 17
Kuwait 1 (Al-Mutawa pen 71)
Yemen 1 (Al-Omki 16)
HT: 0-1

Jan 20
Oman 2 (Al-Hawsani 8, Saleh 84)
Kuwait 1 (Al-Rashidi 82)
HT: 1-0

Jan 20
United Arab Emirates 2 (Omar pen 2, Saeed 64)
Yemen 1 (Al-Sasi 90)
HT: 1-0

Jan 23
United Arab Emirates 3 (Matar 1, 90, Khalili 32)
Kuwait 2 (Al-Mutawa 31, Al-Fahd 35)
HT: 2-2

Jan 23
Oman 2 (Al-Touqui 1, Abu Safi 88)
Yemen 1 (Saleh 9)
HT: 1-1

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oman	3	3	0	0	6	3	9
UAE	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Kuwait	3	0	1	2	4	6	1
Yemen	3	0	1	2	3	5	1

Group B
Jan 18
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al-Qahtani 25, 88)
Bahrain 1 (Yousef pen 13)
HT: 1-1
Sent off: Adnan 34min, M Hussain 62min (both Bahrain)

Jan 18
Iraq 1 (Hawar Mulla Mohamed 39)
Qatar 0
HT: 1-0

Jan 21
Saudi Arabia 1 (Moad 71)
Qatar 1 (Nasser 10)
HT: 0-1

Jan 21
Bahrain 1 (Al-Marzouki 8)
Iraq 1 (Hawar Mulla Mohamed 11)
HT: 1-1

Jan 24
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al-Qahtani pen 12)
Iraq 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Haider (Iraq) 41min

Jan 24
Qatar 1 (Ibrahim 19)
Bahrain 2 (A Hubail 44, 90)
HT: 1-1

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	3	2	1	0	4	2	7
Bahrain	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Iraq	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Qatar	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

Semi-finals
Jan 27
Oman 1 (Al-Maymani 54)
Bahrain 0
HT: 0-0

Jan 27
Saudi Arabia 0
United Arab Emirates 1 (Matar 90)
HT: 0-0

Final
Jan 30
Oman 0
United Arab Emirates 1 (Matar 72)
HT: 0-0

CARIBBEAN CUP

Final round

Sedley Joseph group
In Port-of-Spain, Trinidad

Jan 12
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Glasgow 32)
Barbados 1 (Harvey 66)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - Jack, Telesford, Power, Fitzpatrick (Wiltshire 71), Sealy (Roberts 69), Jemmott (Benito 81), Glasgow, K Baptiste, Daniel, Theobald.
Barbados: Taylor - Straker, Goodridge, Soares (Miller 90), Hawkesworth, Harvey (Williams 73), Parris, Lucas (Grovesnor 78), N Forde, James, Burgess. *Sent off: Hawkesworth 80min.*

Jan 12
Haiti 1 (Brunel 12)
Martinique 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)
Haiti: Fenelon - Gilles, Germain, Guillaume, Brunel, Cadet (Lormera 69), Boucicaut (Dacius 77), Bruny, Chery (Ednerson 54), Vubert, Mayard.
Martinique: Heurlie - Percin, Deluge, Lugiery (Padolly 55), Germany (Bullet 68), Thalien, J Goron, Coridon, Etinof (Lavril 79), Gustan, Linord.

Jan 15
Barbados 0
Haiti 2 (Boucicaut 55, Lormera 90)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Jaurega (A&B)
Barbados: Taylor - Straker, Goodridge, Fenty, Harvey (Lucas 46), Parris, Williams (Soares 65), N Forde, James, Grosvenor, Burgess (Miller 78).
Sent off: James 76min.
Haiti: Fenelon - Germain (Baptiste 42), Guillaume, Brunel, Cadet (Lormera 81), Boucicaut, Bruny, Ednerson, Chery (Dacius 90), Vubert, Mayard.

Jan 15
Trinidad & Tobago 5 (Roberts 3, K Baptiste 36, 76, Glasgow 47, 83)
Martinique 1 (Bullet 17)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - Jack, Telesford, Fitzpatrick, Jemmott (Tinto 67), Roberts (Bailey 61), Glasgow, K Baptiste, Power (M Hislop 80), Daniel, Theobald.
Martinique: Heurlie - Percin, Deluge, Thalien, J Goron (Lugiery 77), Herelle, Padolly, Lavril (Coridon 46), Bullet (Clementia 59), Gustan, Linord. *Sent off: Deluge 32min.*

Jan 17
Barbados 2 (Harvey 27, Soares 42)
Martinique 3 (Percin 8, Clementia 19, Germany 32)
HT: 2-3. **Ref:** Jauregua (A&B)
Barbados: Chase - Straker, Miller, R Hall (Hawkesworth 64), Goodridge, Soares (Lucas 80), Harvey (Williams 64), Parris, N Forde, Grosvenor, Burgess.
Martinique: Heurlie - Percin, Germany (Coridon 54), Thalien, J Goron (Lugiery 84), Herelle, Padolly, Clementia, Bullet, Etinof (Lavril 63), Linord.

Jan 17
Trinidad & Tobago 3 (Jemmott 15, Glasgow 67, 85)
Haiti 1 (Brunel 55)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - M Hislop, Telesford, Fitzpatrick (Wiltshire 46), Jemmott, Roberts, Glasgow, K Baptiste (Tinto 79), Power (Jack 62), Daniel, Theobald.
Haiti: Yvesner - Dacius (Guillaume 89), Gilles, Germain, Parnel, Baptiste (Brunel 54), Marcelin, Edneron, Lormera (Cadet 54), Vubert, Mayard.

SEDLEY JOSEPH GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trinidad & Tob	3	2	1	0	9	3	7
Haiti	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Martinique	3	1	0	2	4	8	3
Barbados	3	0	1	2	3	6	1

Bobby Sookram group
In Marabella, Trinidad

Jan 14
Cuba 1 (Alonso 69)
Guadeloupe 2 (Bizacene 31, Angloma 87)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
Cuba: O Molina - Pedro, Marquez, Clavelo, Alonso (Duarte 88), A Cervantes, More, Alvarez (Martinez 56), Colome, Morales (Villaurrutia 66), Faife.
Guadeloupe: Grandel - Delannay, Vertot, Bizacene (D Mocka 46), Raddas (Theresine 86), Loiseau, Lambourde, Sommeil, Angloma, Hanany (Laurent 72), Vanoukia.

Jan 14
Guyana 0
St Vincent & The Grenadines 2 (S Samuel 4, Glynn 85)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Angela (Aru)
Guyana: Lloyd - Lowe, Rodrigues, Moore, Holligan, G Richardson (Hercules 68), Pollard, Beveny (Harris 61), McKinnon, Codrington, Jerome (Abrams 75).
St Vincent & The Grenadines: Andrews - W John, Hendrickson, W Charles, B Joseph (Browne 90), S Samuel (Glynn 78), Velox, Douglas (Francis 66), Myers, D Walker, Delves.

Jan 16
Guadeloupe 3 (Loiseau 45, Lambourde 54, Raddas pen 88)
Guyana 4 (Codrington pen 23, pen 60, 81, Lowe 65)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)
Guadeloupe: Grandel - Delannay, Theresine (Laurent 75), Vertot, Gavarin (D Mocka 52), Raddas, Loiseau (Angloma 64), Lambourde, Sommeil, Hanany, Vanoukia.
Guyana: Reynolds - Lowe, Rodrigues, Moore, Holligan, Richardson (Beveny 71), Bishop (Abrams 64), Pollard, McKinnon, Codrington (McPherson 87), Jerome.

Jan 16
Cuba 3 (More 27, 59, Duarte 90)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Angela (Aru)
Cuba: O Molina - Pedro, Marquez, Clavelo, Alonso (Ayala 78), Martinez, A Cervantes, More (Duarte 81), Colome, Fernandez, Faife.
St Vincent & The Grenadines: Andrews - W John, Hendrickson, W Charles, B Joseph, S Samuel (Grant 82), Velox (Francis 75), Douglas, Myers (Glynn 66), D Walker, Burgin.

Jan 18
Guadeloupe 1 (D Mocka 13)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
Guadeloupe: Grandel - Delannay, Vertot, Gavarin (Loiseau 50), D Mocka, Raddas (Theresine 90), Angloma, Lambourde, Sommeil, Hanany (Xavier 77), Vanoukia.
St Vincent & The Grenadines: Andrews - W John, Hendrickson, W Charles, B Joseph, S Samuel (Delves 75), Glynn (Browne 46), Velox, Douglas (C Joseph 46), Francis, Burgin.

Jan 18
Cuba 0
Guyana 0
Ref: Moreno (Pan)
Cuba: O Molina - Pedro, Marquez, Clavelo, Alonso, Martinez (Duarte 74), A Cervantes, More (Alvarez 87), Colome, Fernandez (Bermudez 39), Faife.
Guyana: Reynolds - Lowe, Rodrigues, Moore, Hercules (Abrams 70), Holligan, Bishop (Harris 78), Pollard, McKinnon, Codrington, Jerome (Richardson 67).

BOBBY SOOKRAM GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guadeloupe	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Cuba	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Guyana	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
St Vincent & G	3	1	0	2	2	4	3

Semi-finals
Jan 20 - Port-of-Spain
Guadeloupe 1 (Lambourde 83)
Haiti 3 (Cadet 56, Brunel 65, Baptiste 76)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Guadeloupe: Mercury - Marving, Laurent, Vertot, D Mocka (Theresine 78), Xavier, Raddas (Gavarin 74), Angloma, Lambourde, Hanany (Loiseau 52), Vanoukia.
Haiti: Fenelon - Gilles, Germain, Guillaume, Brunel (Baptiste 71), Cadet, Boucicaut (Marcelin 66), Bruny, Ednerson (Chery 42), Vubert, Mayard.

Jan 20 - Port-of-Spain
Trinidad & Tobago 3 (O Molina og 41, Glasgow 57, Theobald 73)
Cuba 1 (Duarte 76)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - M Hislop, Telesford, Fitzpatrick (Wiltshire 79), Jemmott, Roberts, Glasgow (Bailey 86), K Baptiste (Tinto 78), Power, Daniel, Theobald.
Cuba: O Molina - Pedro, Marquez, Clavelo, Alonso, Martinez (Duarte 61), A Cervantes, More, Colome, Morales, Faife (Alvarez 83). *Sent off: Alonso 90min.*

Third-place play-off
Jan 23 - Port-of-Spain
Cuba 2 (A Cervantes 24, 49)
Guadeloupe 1 (Raddas 53)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
Cuba: Quintero - Pedro, J Molina, Clavelo, Martinez (Villaurrutia 86), A Cervantes, Ayala (Morales 75), Colome, Fernandez, Faife, Duarte (Alvarez 81).
Guadeloupe: Mercury - Delannay, Marving, Laurent (Raddas 51), Theresine (D Mocka 56), Vertot, Xavier, Gavarin, Lambourde (Bizacene 20), Angloma, Vanoukia.

Final
Jan 23 - Port-of-Spain
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Daniel 66)
Haiti 2 (Boucicaut 21, Brunel 52)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - M Hislop (Bailey 64), Telesford, Fitzpatrick, Jemmott, Roberts, Glasgow, K Baptiste, Power, Daniel, Theobald.
Haiti: Fenelon - Gilles (Dacius 90), Guillaume, Brunel, Cadet (Lormera 90), Boucicaut (Ednerson 63), Marcelin, Bruny, Chery, Vubert, Mayard.

The Caribbean Cup doubles as the Caribbean qualifying campaign for the 2007 Gold Cup, to be staged in the United States from June 6 to 24. Haiti, Trinidad & Tobago, Cuba and Guadeloupe qualify for the Gold Cup finals

FRIENDLIES

Friday, January 12
Jan 12 - Dubai, UAE
Bahrain 4 (Al-Marzouki 22, 63, Salman 31, T Y Mohamed 45)
Yemen 0
HT: 3-0

Jan 12 - Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates 0
Iran 2 (Khatibi pen 30, E Sadeghi 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Omar (UAE)
UAE: Nasser - Abdulaziz, Abdulrahman, B Saeed (Qassim 82), Masood, Darwish, Jumaa, Khamis, H Saeed (Ebrahim 46), Omar (Saad 46), Matar.
Sent off: Matar 90min.
Iran: Roudbarian - Nosrati, Aghili, Ghorbani, Shakori (Khatibi 26), Vahedi-Nikbakht, Mobali (E Sadeghi 74), Kazemi (Rahmati 76), Badamaki (Nouri 73), Enayati, Rajabzadeh.

Saturday, January 13
Jan 13 - Doha
Qatar 1 (M Mohammed 66)
Oman 1 (Al-Hawsani 26)
HT: 0-1

Sunday, January 14
Jan 14 - Los Angeles, USA
Panama 1 (Tejada)
Armenia 1 (Ara Hakopyan pen)

Jan 14 - Maracaibo
Venezuela 2 (Guerra 17, Arismendi 90)
Sweden 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 14,000. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)
Venezuela: Vega (Toyo 72) - Vallenilla, Rey, Vizcarrondo, Rojas (Rouga 70), M Mea Vitali, Villafraz (Vielma 64), Hernandez (C Gonzalez 54), Guerra, De Ornelas (A Gonzalez 72), Casseres (Arismendi 54).
Sweden: Shaaban - Mobaeck, P Nilsson, Von Schleebrugge, Wendt, Alexandersson (Concha 73), Obeng (Markus Jonsson 80), A Svensson, Ericsson (Holmen 60), Toivonen (Prica 60), Nannskog (Guterstam 73).

Thursday, January 18
Jan 18 - Cuenca
Ecuador 2 (Vaca 16, C Tenorio 24)
Sweden 1 (Prica 89)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)
Ecuador: Camacho - Montano (Quinonez 67), Calle, George, Bagui (Guerrero 66), L Caicedo, Bolanos, Vaca (W Ayovi 46), Lara (Quiroz 58), Zura (F Caicedo 46), C Tenorio (Vera 58).
Sweden: Alvbage (Wiland 46) - Markus Jonsson, Sandberg, Von Schleebrugge, Concha, Holmen (Ishizaki 81), Wernbloom (Mobaeck 59), A Svensson (Ericsson 59), Obeng (Wendt 70), Guterstam (Nannskog 59), Prica.

Saturday, January 20
Jan 20 - Carson
United States 3 (Donovan pen 44, Bornstein 57, Cooper 80)
Denmark 1 (D Sorensen 37)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,048. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
United States: Reis - Albright (Namoff 63), Conrad, Boswell (Califf 89), Bornstein, Mastroeni (Beckerman 86), Clark, Donovan, Rolfe (Pearce 74), Johnson (Cooper 63), Jaqua (Mapp 46).
Denmark: Christiansen - Gravgaard, Jacobsen, Christensen, C Sorensen (Christopher Poulsen 68), W Jorgensen, Nymann (Keller 46), Wurtz (K Nielsen 81), Zimling (Norregaard 58), S Poulsen (M Nielsen 68), D Sorensen (Bech 46).

Sunday, January 21
Jan 21 - Quito
Ecuador 1 (Zura 82)
Sweden 1 (Nannskog 69)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Garay (Per)
Ecuador: Viteri - De Jesus, Hurtado, Quinonez (Calle 46), George (Bagui 76), Quiroz, M Ayovi (Guerrero 66), Ladines (L Caicedo 46), W Ayovi, Vera (F Caicedo 46), C Tenorio (Zura 79). *Sent off: Guerrero 85min.*
Sweden: Shaaban (Wiland 46) - Markus Jonsson, Sandberg, P Nilsson, Wendt, Holmen (Concha 62), Mobaeck (Ishizaki 80), A Svensson, Ericsson, Prica (Obeng 72), Nannskog (Toivonen 82). *Sent off: A Svensson 85min.*

Wednesday, January 24
Jan 24 - San Salvador
El Salvador 1 (Quintanilla 48)
Denmark 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Rivera (ElS)
Denmark: Ankergren - Christensen (Jacobsen 82), K Nielsen, Ribers, Christopher Poulsen, Wurtz (Zimling 64), Kvist (Norregaard 58), Kristensen (Borring 46), Bech (Gravgaard 72), S Poulsen (Keller 46), Nordstrand.

Saturday, January 27
Jan 27 - Tegucigalpa
Honduras 1 (S Martinez pen 83)
Denmark 1 (Nordstrand 79)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,047
Honduras: Coello - Figueroa, Beata, Bernardez (Garcia 46), Mendoza (J Izaguirre 71), E Izaguirre (Hernandez 66), Claros (E Martinez 46), Ferrera, W Palacios, W Velasquez (S Martinez 61), J Martinez.
Denmark: Christiansen - Jacobsen, Gravgaard, Christensen (K Nielsen 59), C Sorensen, Norregaard, Wurtz (Keller 46), Zimling (Kristensen 43), S Poulsen (Nymann 65), Nordstrand (Borring 85), Kvist (Bech 65).

Wednesday, January 31
Jan 31 - Panama City
Panama 2 (Canales 29, Aguilar 82)
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Jack 46)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Vidal (Pan)
Panama: McFarlane - L Henriquez, Rivera, Guardia, Solanilla, Mitre, Perez, Escobar (A Henriquez 83), Canales (Arosemena 71), Tejada (Aguilar 81), Phillips (Herrera 65).
Trinidad & Tobago: Phillips - Jack, Theobald, K Baptiste, Daniel, Fitzpatrick (C Baptiste 46), Power, Wiltshire (Carter 65), Roberts (Bailey 73), Glasgow (Sealy 65), Telesford.

Saturday, February 3
Feb 3 - Jerez, Spain
Poland 4 (Dudka 25, Kokoszka 32, Iwanski 70, Golanski 76)
Estonia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Ruiz Herrera (Spa)
Poland: Fabianski (Pawelek 61) - Golanski, Kokoszka, Dudka, Bronowicki, Lobodzinski, Murawski, Sobolewski (Piechniak 66), Gargula (Iwanski 61), Wawrzyniak (Piszczek 61), Matusiak (B Grzelak 61).
Estonia: Poom - Allas, Barengrub, Jaager (Roops 25), Sidorenkov (Siszov 46), Dmitrijev, Kams (Konsa 66), Leetma, Anniste (Reim 80), Terehhov (Purje 46), Neemelo. *Sent off: Allas 86min.*

Sunday, February 4
Feb 4 - Alajuela
Costa Rica 4 (Wallace 30, A Solis 44, 54, R Fonseca 58)
Trinidad & Tobago 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Porras (CR)
Costa Rica: Porras (Alfaro 71) - Cordero, Umana, J Drummond, Wallace (Benneth 55), L Gonzalez (Montoya 78), Barrantes, Rodriguez, Centeno (Hernandez 60), R Fonseca (Furtado 78), A Solis (Bernard 58).
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - Telesford, Roberts, Daniel, K Baptiste (Wiltshire 46), Jack, Jemmott (Sealy 84), Power, Glasgow, Theobald, C Baptiste (Tinto 81).

Tuesday, February 6
Feb 6 - Gaborone
Botswana 1 (Moloi 60)
Namibia 0
HT: 0-0

Feb 6 - London
Denmark 3 (Tomasson 5, 38, D Jensen 28)
Australia 1 (Emerton 85)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 12,476. **Ref:** Styles (Eng)
Denmark: T Sorensen - Jacobsen, Gravgaard (Kroldrup 76), Agger, N Jensen, D Jensen (Wurtz 67), Christian Poulsen, Jorgensen (C Jensen 72), Rommedahl (Gronkjaer 46), Tomasson (Nordstrand 86), Kahlenberg.
Australia: Petkovic - Emerton, Kisnorbo, Thwaite, Chipperfield, Grella, Skoko (Burns 67), Cahill (Griffiths 75), Sterjovski, Holman, Aloisi.

Feb 6 - London
Ghana 4 (L Kingston 50, Muntari 53, Agogo 60, Frimpong 76)
Nigeria 1 (Taiwo pen 65)
HT: 0-0
Ghana: R Kingston - Sarpei, Mohamed (Paintsil 46), Illiasu, Mensah, Appiah (E Addo 82), Essien (Dickoh 88), L Kingston (Asamoah), Muntari, Agogo (Frimpong 75), Gyan.
Nigeria: Enyeama - Taiwo, Yobo, Nwaneri, Obodo, Abbey, Utaka, Olofinjana (Aiyegbeni 76), Odemwingie, Makinwa (Aghahowa 34), Mikel.

Feb 6 - London
Greece 0
South Korea 1 (Lee Chun-soo 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000
Greece: Nikopolidis (Chalkias 46) - Seitaridis, Kyrgiakos (Mantzios 78), Fissas (Vyntra 46), Basinas, Katsouranis, Anatolakis (Goumas 46), Gekas (Giannakopoulos 46), Karagounis, Samaras (Amanatidis 46), Haristeas.
South Korea: Kim Yong-dae - Kim Jin-kyu, Kim Sang-sik, Oh Beom-seok, Lee Young-pyo (Kim Chi-woo 46), Kim Nam-il (Kim Jung-woo 61), Lee Ho, Lee Chun-soo (Oh Jang-eun 90), Park Ji-sung (Yeom Ki-hun 80), Seol Ki-hyeon, Cho Jae-jin (Kim Do-heon 74).

Feb 6 - Rouen, France
Ivory Coast 1 (Drogba 77)
Guinea 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Cailleux (Fra)
Ivory Coast: Barry - K Toure, Zokora, Meite, A Keita, Yapi Yapo, N'Dri, Boka, S Kalou, Dindane, Drogba.
Guinea: Diarso - Jabo, M Diallo, Kalabane, I Camara, M Sylla, P Thiam, Ismael Bangoura, Feindouno, Mansare, K Diawara.

Feb 6 - Paris
Lithuania 1 (Jankauskas 28)
Mali 3 (Tamboura 25, M Diarra 31, Diallo 43)
HT: 1-3. **Ref:** Piccirillo (Fra)
Lithuania: Malinauskas - Stankevicius, Dziaukstas, Skerla, Semberas, Miceika (Paulauskas 78), Kalonas (Kavaliauskas 80), Danilevicius, Radzinevicius (Savenas 46), Jankauskas (Beniusis 88), Velicka (Morinas 46).

Feb 6 - Belfast
Northern Ireland 0
Wales 0
Att: 14,000. **Ref:** Richmond (Sco)
Northern Ireland: Taylor (Ingham 46) - Duff, Craigan (Webb 78), A Hughes, Capaldi, Gillespie, Davis, Clingan (McCann 61), Brunt, Lafferty (Shiels 68), Sproule (Thompson 68).
Wales: Coyne - Duffy (Ricketts 46), Evans, D Collins, Nyatanga, S Davies, Koumas, Robinson, Parry (Crofts 81), Vaughan (Cotterill 46; Easter 69), Bellamy.

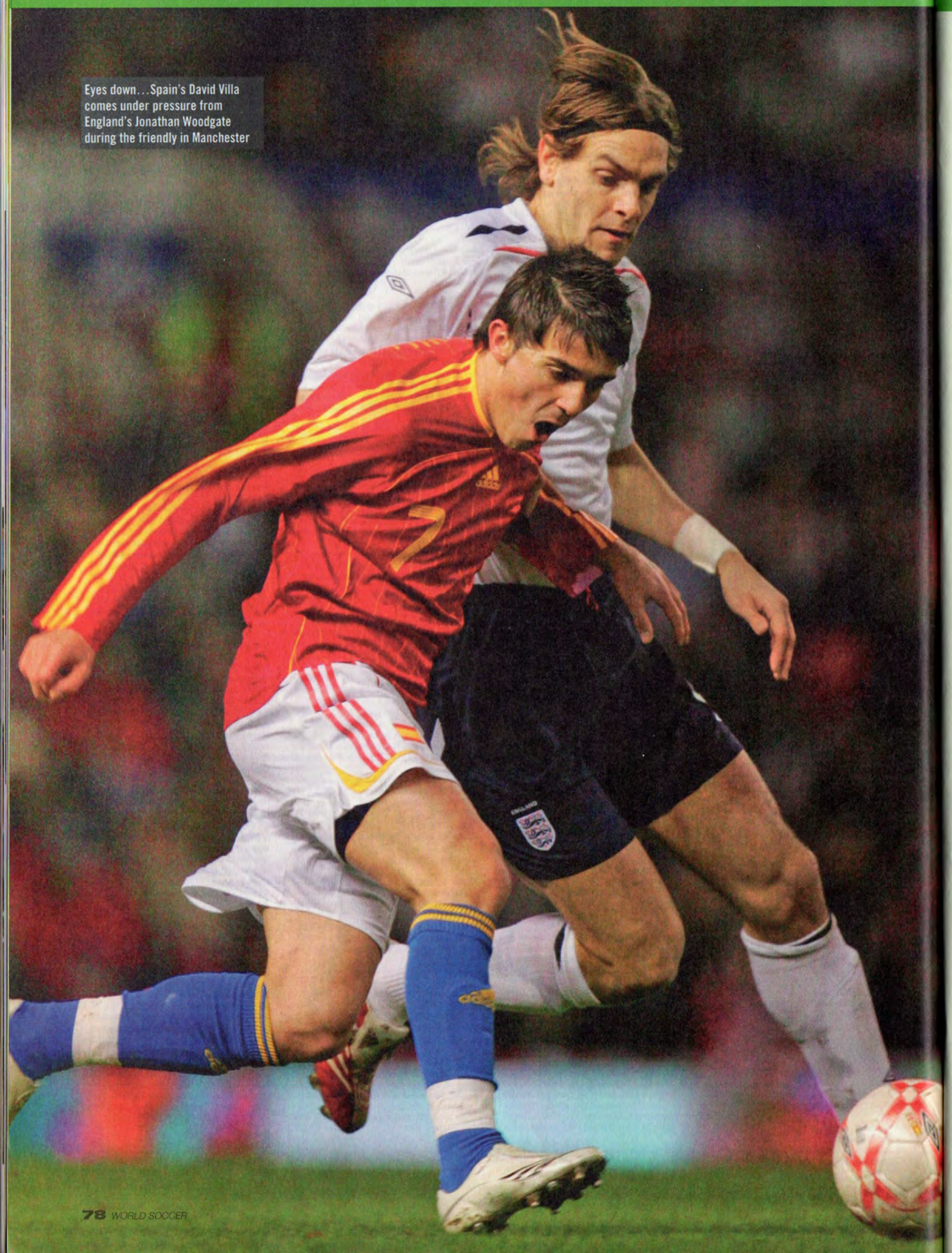
Feb 6 - London
Portugal 2 (Simao 82, Ricardo Carvalho 89)
Brazil 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Portugal: Ricardo - Miguel, Ricardo Carvalho (Fernando Meira 90), Jorge Andrade, Caneira (Paulo Ferreira 46), Tiago (Joao Moutinho 67), Petit, Deco (Hugo Viana 60), Quaresma, Helder Postiga (Nuno Gomes 74), Cristiano Ronaldo (Simao 62).
Brazil: Helton - Maicon (Daniel Alves 63), Lucio, Juan (Luisao 46), Gilberto, Edmilson (Tinga 61), Gilberto Silva, Elano, Kaka, Rafael Sobis (Adriano 46), Fred (Diego 68).

Wednesday, February 7
Feb 7 - Shkoder
Albania 0
Macedonia 1 (Ristic 33)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Bertini (Ita)
Albania: Beqaj - E Beqiri, Dallku, Haxhi, Dede, Lala (Bulku 46), Hasi, Muka (Duro 46), Kapllani (Bogdani 46), Curri, Tare (Berisha 33).
Macedonia: Nikoloski - Noveski (Pollozhani 46), Sedloski, I Mitreski, Popov, Sumulikoski (Jancevski 75), A Mitreski, Grozdanovski (Tashevski 46), Lazarevski, Ristic (Maznov 62), Pandev.

Feb 7 - Algiers
Algeria 2 (Saifi 63, Meniri 68)
Libya 1 (A Chibani 48)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** El-Harzi (Tun)
Algeria: Gaouaoui - Hosni, Meniri, Bouzid, Zarabi, Matmour (Amri 55), Mansouri (Hadjadj 90), Ziani (Bougueche 89), Bouazza (Younes 70), Saifi (Moumen 78), Daham (Cherrad 46).
Libya: El-Amari - Y Chibani, Athmane, Echouhane, Senouci, A Chibani, Oussama, El-Idrissi, El-Bichari, Zaoui (Soltane 72), Abdelkader (Hamed 90).

Feb 7 - Andorra La Vella
Andorra 0
Armenia 0

Feb 7 - Brussels
Belgium 0
Czech Republic 2 (Koller 6, Kulic 74)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Granat (Pol)
Belgium: Stijnen (Vandenbussche 67) - Hoefkens (Vanden Borre 46), Van Buyten, Van der Heyden (Van Damme 46), Vermaelen (Simons 33), Daerden, Defour, Fellaini, Martens (Vandenbergh 73), Mudingayi, Pieroni (Dembele 61). *Sent off: Vanden Borre 84min.*
Czech Republic: Cech - Ujfalusi, Jiranek, Rozehnal (Kovac 46), Jankulovski, Galasek (Matejovsky 67), Polak, Rosicky (Pudil 46), Slonko (Plasil 46), Baros (Kulic 55), Koller (Lafata 85).



Eyes down...Spain's David Villa comes under pressure from England's Jonathan Woodgate during the friendly in Manchester

Feb 7 - Suzhou
China 2 (Han Peng 30, Li Jinyu 48)
Kazakhstan 1 (Suyumagambetov 16)
HT: 1-1

Feb 7 - Cucuta
Colombia 1 (Rodallega 81)
Uruguay 3 (Abreu pen 17, pen 60, Vargas 73)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hoyos
Colombia: Calero - Palacio (B Garcia 75), W Moreno, Mosquera, Benitez, Velasquez, Dominguez (Torres 70), Marin, Ferreira (Ospina 14), T Moreno (Rodallega 64), Murillo (R F Garcia 46). *Sent off: Calero 13min.*
Uruguay: Carini - Scotti, Godin, Ithurralde, Fucile (Castro 76), Arevalo, A Gonzalez, Pouso (Mozzo 68), Vargas (Vera 86), Abreu (Vigneri 73), Suarez. *Sent off: Suarez 84min.*

Feb 7 - Rijeka
Croatia 2 (Petric 26, Modric 38)
Norway 1 (Vaagen Moen 86)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Kalt (Fra)
Croatia: Pletikosa - Corluka, Simic, Vejic (Zivkovic 80), Babic, Srna, Leko (Pranjic 80), Modric, Kranjcar, Balaban (Budan 62), Petric (Eduardo 46).
Norway: Opdal - Rambekk (Bjorkoy 80), Hagen, Hangeland, M Johnsen (Vaagan Moen 46), Andresen, Haestad (Svindal Larsen 86), Gamst Pedersen (Grindheim 40), J A Riise, Solskjaer (Iversen 64), Carew (Aarst 46).

Feb 7 - Cairo
Egypt 2 (Zaki 43, Fathi 88)
Sweden 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Abdalla (Lby)
Egypt: El-Hadary - Fathi, Gomaa, Saeed, Mouawad (Shalabi 72), A Hassan (Moustafa 78), Shawky, Abd Rabbou, Hossam (Gamal 61), Moteab, Zaki (Zidan 61).
Sweden: Isaksson (Shaaban 46) - M Nilsson, Mellberg, P Hansson, Edman (Von Schleebrugge 46), Linderoth, A Svensson, Kallstrom (Bakircioglu 66), Wilhelmsson (A Johansson 71), Prica, Allback (Rosenberg 75).

Feb 7 - Manchester
England 0
Spain 1 (Iniesta 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 58,247. **Ref:** Weiner (Ger)
England: Foster - G Neville (Richards 65), Ferdinand, Woodgate (Carragher 65), P Neville (Downing 74), Wright-Phillips (Defoe 70), Gerrard (Barry 46), Carrick, Lampard (Barton 80), Dyer, Crouch.
Spain: Casillas - Sergio Ramos (Angel 46), Puyol (Javi Navarro 46), Pablo, Capdevila, Angulo (Iniesta 57), Xavi, Albelda, Silva (Arizmendi 68), Villa (Fabregas 74), Morientes (Fernando Torres 46).

Feb 7 - Saint-Denis
France 0
Argentina 1 (Saviola 15)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 79,862. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
France: Coupet - Sagnol (Clerc 46), Squillaci, Escude, Abidal, Ribery, Vieira, Makelele (Cisse 88), Malouda (Govou 46), Trezeguet (Anelka 72), Henry.
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Burdisso, Ayala, G Milito, Heinze, Zanetti, Gago, Cambiasso, L Gonzalez (Gutierrez 78), Saviola (Aguero 84), Crespo (D Milito 78).

Feb 7 - Tbilisi
Georgia 1 (Siradze 76)
Turkey 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 53,000. **Ref:** Lajuks (Lat)
Georgia: Revishvili (Lomaia 46) - Shashiashvili, Salukvadze, Khizanishvili, Eliava, Menteshashvili, Tskitishvili, Burduli (Ashvetia 82), Kvirkvelia (Gogua 66), Demetradze (Benashvili 87), Siradze (Mujiri 77).
Turkey: Volkan - Hamit Altintop, Aydin, Servet, Ibrahim Uzulmez, Tugay (Gokhan 79), Sabri (Mehmet Topuz 63), Mehmet Aurelio, Tuncay (Gokdeniz 46), Arda (Tumer 64), Halil Altintop (Fatih Tekke 46).

Feb 7 - Dusseldorf
Germany 3 (Kuranyi 7, Gomez 30, Frings 66)
Switzerland 1 (Streller 71)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 51,333. **Ref:** Bossen (Hol)
Germany: Lehmann - A Friedrich, Mertesacker, Metzelder, Lahm, Frings (Hitzlsperger 74), Ballack (Borowski 46), Fritz, Schweinsteiger (Jansen 74), Gomez (Hanke 58), Kuranyi (Schlaudraff 83).
Switzerland: Benaglio - P Degen, Senderos, Grichting, Magnin (Dzemaili 59), Vogel (Spycher 58), Behrami, H Yakin (Vonlanthen 57), Barnetta (D Degen 70), Margairaz (Inler 78), Frei (Streller 57).

Feb 7 - Amsterdam
Holland 4 (Babel 68, Sneijder 71, Mathijsen 79, Van der Vaart pen 89)
Russia 1 (Bystrov 76)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 24,589. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)
Holland: Stekelenburg - Jaliens, Bouma, Mathijsen, Van Bronckhorst, Landzaat (Sneijder 46), De Jong (Mendes da Silva 63), Seedorf (De Cler 78), Van der Vaart, Vennegoor of Hesselink (Huntelaar 78), Kuijt (Babel 46).
Russia: Akinfeev - Anyukov, A Berezutsky (V Berezutsky 69), Kolodin, Zhirkov, Bystrov, Semshov, Titov (Aldonin 58), Saenko, Arshavin (Pavlyuchenko 72), Bilyaletdinov (Sychev 46).

Feb 7 - Tehran
Iran 2 (Khatibi 5, Rajabzadeh 88)
Belarus 2 (V Hleb 53, 59)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Al-Fadhli (Kuw)
Iran: Roudbarian (Taleblou 46) - Asadi, Aghili (Hosseini 46), Rezaei, A H Sadeghi (Badamaki 67), Vahedi-Nikbakht, E Sadeghi (Mobali 60), Nekounam, Teimoorian, Khatibi, Rajabzadeh.
Belarus: Zhevnov - Yurevich, Plaskonny (V Hleb 46), Omelyanchuk, Shtanyuk, Korytko (Chelyadinsky 55), Lentsevich, Strakhanovich (Poryvayev 79), Kalachev (Klimenko 70), Kornilenko, Kutuzov (Kontsevoy 65).

Feb 7 - Tel Aviv
Israel 1 (Badir 38)
Ukraine 1 (Kalinichenko 73)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Santiago Rodriguez (Spa)
Israel: Awat - Shpungin, Ben Haim, Benado, Gershon, Ziv, Badir, Toema (Katan 81), Benayoun, Ben Sahar (Balili 69), Ben Shushan.
Ukraine: Shust - Yezerskyi, Rusol, Chygrynskyy, Romanchuk (Sviderskyi 63), Tymoshchuk (Mykhalyk 46), Levchenko, Husiev (Rotan 60), Kalinichenko, Voronin (Milevskyi 46), Shevchenko (Bielik 60).

Feb 7 - Hesperange
Luxembourg 2 (Joachim 65, Sagramola 83)
Gambia 1 (Jarjue 15)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 520. **Ref:** Circhetta (Swi)
Luxembourg: Joubert - Bigard, Kintziger, Hoffmann, Mutsch, Joachim (Heinz 90), Lombardelli (De Sousa 77), Peters, Payal, Remy, Collette (Sagramola 64).
Gambia: Touray - Sonko, Nije (Ceesay 62), Uster (Conateh 46), Badjie, Joof, Soley, Mendy, Nyang, Demba, Jarjue (Camara 75).

Feb 7 - Valletta
Malta 1 (G Agius 8)
Austria 1 (Ivanschitz 48)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bartolini
Malta: Haber (Hogg 70) - Wellman, Said (Azzopardi 46), Briffa, Dimech, G Agius (Sciberras 44), Sammut (Ciantar 87), Michael Mifsud, Mallia (Cohen 78), Scerri (Woods 65), Pace.
Austria: Macho (Manninger 46) - Standfest (Sariyar 76), Stranzl, Martin Hiden, Ibertsberger (Fuchs 46), Aufhauser, Prager (Kiesenebner 46), Weissenberger (Garics 67), Linz (Akagunduz 73), Ivanschitz, Kuljic.

Feb 7 - Casablanca
Morocco 1 (Chamakh 28)
Tunisia 1 (Jomaa 62)
HT: 1-0
Morocco: Jarmouni - Rebati, Askri, Karbouri, Mouha, Souarmi (Mahjoubi), Safri (Faouzi), Chamakh, Assas, Boussoufa (Mbarki), Hajji.
Tunisia: Kasraoui - Boussaidi (Ghzel), Bekri, Jemmali, Hagui, Ouertani (Ragued), Mnari, Chedli (Hammi), Chikhaoui (Ziadi), Nafti, Jomaa (Ben Saada).

Feb 7 - Auckland
New Zealand 0
Tahiti 0
Ref: Hester (NZ)
New Zealand: Paston - Pritchett, Tinkler, Sigmund, Watson, Barron, Robinson (Hayne 84), Sandbrook (Pearce 61), Christie, Webster (Ellensohn 69), Fisher.
Tahiti: Tapeta - Li Fung Kuee, Tchen, Neuffer (Williams 73), Paigne, Tinorua (Mataitai), Ly Waut, Pahio (Kugone 68), Bennett, Zaveroni, Wagemann (Tetavahai 77).

Feb 7 - Jerez, Spain
Poland 2 (Michal Zewlakow pen 48, Matusiak 79)
Slovakia 2 (Jakubko 1, Skrtel 45)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Perdigones Pacheco (Spa)
Poland: Boruc (Kowalewski 64) - Wasilewski, Bak, Michal Zewlakow (Radomski 64), Bronowicki, Jelen (Krzynowek 46), Lewandowski, Kazmierczak, Dudka (Lobodzinski 46), R Grzelak (Matusiak 46), Rasiak (B Grzelak 71).
Slovakia: Contofalsky - Singlar, Skrtel, J Durica, Gresko, Zofcak (Hamsik 81), Borbely (Klimpl 88), Svento, Holosko (Strba 77), Vittek, Jakubko (Sebo 65).

Feb 7 - Bucharest
Romania 2 (Mazilu 75, Mutu 89)
Moldova 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Deaconu (Rom)
Romania: Coman (Lobont 46) - Contra, Tamas (Radu 46), Ghionea (Goian 46), Marin (Pulhac 78), O Petre (Codrea 46), Rosu (Cristea 46), F Petre (Nicolita 46), Cocis (Buga 74), Mutu, Marica (Mazilu 63).
Moldova: Pascenko (Calancea 46) - Golovatenco, Lascencov, Epureanu, Namasco, Gatcan, Ivanov, Comlionoc (Berco 66), Tigirlas (Bulgaru 58), Bugaiov (Rogaciov 46), Frunza (Alexeev 46).

Feb 7 - Rouen, France
Senegal 2 (Toure 9, P W N'Diaye 64)
Benin 1 (Omotoyossi 79)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Lannoy (Fra)
Senegal: K Faye - C Gueye, I Faye, Sambou, Ndaw, P M Ba, Sene, Sy (M N'Diaye), Toure, B Gueye (Badji), P W N'Diaye.
Benin: Chitou - Gaspoz, Ademon, Adjamossi, Chrysostome, Boco, Oketola, Ahoueya, Omotoyossi, Abou, Ogoumbiyi.

Feb 7 - Domzale
Slovenia 1 (Lavric 34)
Estonia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Ledentu (Fra)
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Ilic (Filekovic 61), Jokic, M Mavric, Cesar, Sukalo (Zlogar 74), Koren (Komac 46), Ceh (Cipot 86), Novakovic (Rakovic 46), Lavric, Birsa (Dedic 81).
Estonia: Poom - Shishov (Allas 70), Stepanov, Barengrub (Konsa 82), Kruglov, Rahn, Kams (Oper 74), Klavan, Neemelo (Piiroja 79), Dmitrijev (Reim 90), Terehhov (Sidorenkov 67).

Feb 7 - Lome
Togo 2 (Olufade 25, Adebayor 40)
Cameroon 2 (Boya 65, Ngom Kome 90)
HT: 2-0

Feb 7 - Glendale
United States 2 (Conrad 52, Donovan 90)
Mexico 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 62,462. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
United States: Howard - Bornstein, Bocanegra, Albright (Gros 68), Conrad, Dempsey (Carroll 75), Clark, Convey, Mastroeni, Donovan, Rolfe (Johnson 64).
Mexico: O Sanchez - Osorio, Salcido, Marquez, R Morales (Guardado 46), Torrado (Bravo 62), A Medina (Fonseca 46), Pardo, Pineda, Blanco (Bautista 46), Borgetti.

Feb 7 - Karshi
Uzbekistan 0
Azerbaijan 0

Feb 7 - Maracaibo
Venezuela 0
Chile 1 (Fernandez 43)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)
Venezuela: Vega - Vallenilla (C Gonzalez 54), Rey, A Cichero (Vizcarrondo 56), Rojas, M Mea Vitali (Giroletti 67), Fernandez (Vielma 59), H Gonzalez, Guerra (Rouga 64), Maldonado (De Ornelas 69), Torrealba (Arismendi 54).
Chile: Bravo - Fuentes, J Vargas, P Contreras, Figueroa, Iturra, Sanhueza, M Gonzalez (Droguett 80), Fernandez (Villanueva 73), Suazo (Vidal 90), Navia (Sanchez 73).

Friday, February 9

Feb 9 - Waitakere
New Zealand 0
Tahiti 0
New Zealand: Paston - Boxall, Cowan, Sigmund, Watson, Barron, Robinson, Pearce (Barbarouses 70), Ellensohn (Hayne 46), Webster (Matthews 46), Fisher.
Tahiti: Samin - Li Fung Kuee, Tchen, Neuffer, Paigne, Mataitai (Teuira 64), Kugone, Ly Waut, Bennett, Zaveroni, Wagemann (Tauihara 64).

CYPRUS TOURNAMENT

Semi-finals

Feb 6 - Limassol
Cyprus 2 (Yiasoumi 18, Okkas 72)
Hungary 1 (Priskin 88)
HT: 1-0
Cyprus: Morfis (Georgallides 46) - Elia (Theofilou 71), Charalambous, Christou, Lambrou (Louka 46), Krassas, Michael (Makrides 52), Charalambides (C Nicolaou 64), Satsias, Okkas (Vattis 73), Yiasoumi (Aloneftis 61).
Hungary: Vegh - Csizmadia, Juhasz, Balogh, Vanczak, B Toth, Vass, Huszti (Tisza 76), Sandor (Kanta 63), Gera, Hrepka (Priskin 57).

Feb 6 - Larnaca
Bulgaria 2 (Surnins og 14, Yovov 33)
Latvia 0
HT: 2-0
Bulgaria: Ivankov - Kishishev, Tunchev, Tomasic, Zanev, Hristov (Georgiev 48), Yankov, Peev, Yovov (Genkov 62), S Todorov (Bozhinov 46), Jankovic.
Latvia: Kolinko - Kacanovs, Gorkss, Klava, Surnins (Zirnis 34), Visnakovs, Astafjevs, Morozs (Pahars 46), Solonicins (Kosmacovs 87), Verpakovskis (Rimkus 62), Karlsons (Kalnins 80).

Third-place play-off

Feb 7 - Limassol
Hungary 2 (Priskin 31, 53)
Latvia 0
HT: 1-0
Hungary: Fulop - Csizmadia, Balogh, Vasko, Pollak, Filkor (B Toth 89), Zsidai, Tozser (Rodenbucher 90), Kanta (Sandor 69), Farkas (Tisza 89), Priskin (Hrepka 90).
Latvia: Kolinko - Klava, Gorkss, Ivanovs, Zirnis (Kacanovs 57), Visnakovs, Morozs, Astafjevs, Solonicins (Surnins 84), Verpakovskis (Pahars 46), Rimkus (Karlsons 46).

Final

Feb 7 - Nicosia
Cyprus 0
Bulgaria 3 (Berbatov pen 44, 87, Georgiev 68)
HT: 0-1
Cyprus: Morfis (Giorgallides 46) - Lambrou, Louka, Michael (Marangos 74), Charalambides (Solomou 21), Elia (Theofilou 65), Garpozis, Makrides, Aloneftis (Vattis 78), Constantinou, Yiasoumi (Okkas 68).
Bulgaria: G Petkov - Kishishev (Yankov 77), Topuzakov, V Iliev, Zanev (Tunchev 71), Angelov, Telkiyski (Genkov 80), Peev (Hristov 63), S Todorov (Georgiev 46), Bozhinov (Jankovic 46), Berbatov.

EURO 2008 QUALIFIERS

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Finland	5	3	2	0	7	2	11
Serbia	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Poland	5	3	1	1	6	5	10
Portugal	4	2	1	1	8	3	7
Belgium	5	2	1	2	4	2	7
Kazakhstan	5	0	2	3	1	7	2
Armenia	4	0	1	3	0	5	1
Azerbaijan	4	0	1	3	1	8	1

16.08.06 Belgium-Kazakhstan 0-0
02.09.06 Poland-Finland 1-3
02.09.06 Serbia-Azerbaijan 1-0
06.09.06 Armenia-Belgium 0-1
06.09.06 Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan 1-1
06.09.06 Finland-Portugal 1-1
06.09.06 Poland-Serbia 1-1
07.10.06 Armenia-Finland 0-0
07.10.06 Kazakhstan-Poland 0-1
07.10.06 Portugal-Azerbaijan 3-0
07.10.06 Serbia-Belgium 1-0
11.10.06 Belgium-Azerbaijan 3-0
11.10.06 Kazakhstan-Finland 0-2
11.10.06 Poland-Portugal 2-1
11.10.06 Serbia-Armenia 3-0
15.11.06 Belgium-Poland 0-1
15.11.06 Finland-Armenia 1-0
15.11.06 Portugal-Kazakhstan 3-0
24.03.07 Kazakhstan-Serbia
24.03.07 Poland-Azerbaijan
24.03.07 Portugal-Belgium
28.03.07 Azerbaijan-Finland
28.03.07 Poland-Armenia
28.03.07 Serbia-Portugal
02.06.07 Azerbaijan-Poland
02.06.07 Belgium-Portugal
02.06.07 Finland-Serbia
02.06.07 Kazakhstan-Armenia
06.06.07 Armenia-Poland
06.06.07 Finland-Belgium
06.06.07 Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan
22.08.07 Armenia-Portugal
22.08.07 Belgium-Serbia
22.08.07 Finland-Kazakhstan
08.09.07 Azerbaijan-Armenia
08.09.07 Portugal-Poland
08.09.07 Serbia-Finland
12.09.07 Armenia-Azerbaijan
12.09.07 Finland-Poland
12.09.07 Kazakhstan-Belgium
12.09.07 Portugal-Serbia
13.10.07 Armenia-Serbia
13.10.07 Azerbaijan-Portugal
13.10.07 Belgium-Finland
13.10.07 Poland-Kazakhstan
17.10.07 Azerbaijan-Serbia
17.10.07 Belgium-Armenia
17.10.07 Kazakhstan-Portugal
17.11.07 Finland-Azerbaijan
17.11.07 Poland-Belgium
17.11.07 Portugal-Armenia
17.11.07 Serbia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Armenia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Azerbaijan-Belgium
21.11.07 Portugal-Finland
21.11.07 Serbia-Poland

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Scotland	4	3	0	1	9	3	9
France	4	3	0	1	11	2	9
Italy	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Ukraine	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
Lithuania	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Georgia	4	1	0	3	9	9	3
Faroe Islands	4	0	0	4	0	18	0

16.08.06 Faroe Islands-Georgia 0-6
02.09.06 Georgia-France 0-3
02.09.06 Italy-Lithuania 1-1
02.09.06 Scotland-Faroe Islands 6-0
06.09.06 France-Italy 3-1
06.09.06 Lithuania-Scotland 1-2
06.09.06 Ukraine-Georgia 3-2
07.10.06 Faroe Islands-Lithuania 0-1
07.10.06 Italy-Ukraine 2-0
07.10.06 Scotland-France 1-0
11.10.06 France-Faroe Islands 5-0
11.10.06 Georgia-Italy 1-3
11.10.06 Ukraine-Scotland 2-0
24.03.07 Faroe Islands-Ukraine
24.03.07 Lithuania-France
24.03.07 Scotland-Georgia
28.03.07 Georgia-Faroe Islands
28.03.07 Italy-Scotland
28.03.07 Ukraine-Lithuania
02.06.07 France-Ukraine
02.06.07 Lithuania-Georgia
02.06.07 Faroe Islands-Italy
06.06.07 Faroe Islands-Scotland
06.06.07 France-Georgia
06.06.07 Lithuania-Italy
08.09.07 Georgia-Ukraine
08.09.07 Italy-France
08.09.07 Scotland-Lithuania
12.09.07 France-Scotland
12.09.07 Lithuania-Faroe Islands
12.09.07 Ukraine-Italy
13.10.07 Faroe Islands-France
13.10.07 Italy-Georgia
13.10.07 Scotland-Ukraine
17.10.07 France-Lithuania
17.10.07 Georgia-Scotland
17.10.07 Ukraine-Faroe Islands
17.11.07 Lithuania-Ukraine
17.11.07 Scotland-Italy
21.11.07 Georgia-Lithuania
21.11.07 Italy-Faroe Islands
21.11.07 Ukraine-France

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkey	3	3	0	0	8	0	9
Greece	3	3	0	0	6	0	9
Norway	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Bosnia-Herz	4	1	1	2	8	11	4
Malta	3	1	0	2	4	8	3
Hungary	4	1	0	3	5	8	3
Moldova	4	0	1	3	2	10	1

02.09.06 Hungary-Norway 1-4
02.09.06 Malta-Bosnia-Herz 2-5
02.09.06 Moldova-Greece 0-1
06.09.06 Bosnia-Herz-Hungary 1-3
06.09.06 Norway-Moldova 2-0
06.09.06 Turkey-Malta 2-0
07.10.06 Greece-Norway 1-0
07.10.06 Hungary-Turkey 0-1
07.10.06 Moldova-Bosnia-Herz 2-2
11.10.06 Bosnia-Herz-Greece 0-4
11.10.06 Malta-Hungary 2-1
11.10.06 Turkey-Moldova 5-0
24.03.07 Greece-Turkey
24.03.07 Moldova-Malta
24.03.07 Norway-Bosnia-Herz
28.03.07 Hungary-Moldova
28.03.07 Malta-Greece
28.03.07 Turkey-Norway
02.06.07 Bosnia-Herz-Turkey
02.06.07 Greece-Hungary
02.06.07 Norway-Malta
06.06.07 Greece-Moldova
06.06.07 Bosnia-Herz-Malta
06.06.07 Norway-Hungary
08.09.07 Hungary-Bosnia-Herz
08.09.07 Malta-Turkey
08.09.07 Moldova-Norway
12.09.07 Bosnia-Herz-Moldova
12.09.07 Norway-Greece
12.09.07 Turkey-Hungary
13.10.07 Greece-Bosnia-Herz
13.10.07 Hungary-Malta
13.10.07 Moldova-Turkey
17.10.07 Bosnia-Herz-Norway
17.10.07 Malta-Moldova
17.10.07 Turkey-Greece
17.11.07 Greece-Malta
17.11.07 Moldova-Hungary
17.11.07 Norway-Turkey
21.11.07 Hungary-Greece
21.11.07 Malta-Norway
21.11.07 Turkey-Bosnia-Herz

Group D

Feb 7 - Serravalle

San Marino 1 (Manuel Marani 86)
Republic of Ireland 2 (Kilbane 49, Ireland 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,294. **Ref:** Rasmussen (Den)
San Marino: A Simoncini - C Valentini, Albani, D Simoncini, Muccioli, Michele Marani, Bonini (Vannucci 77), Domeniconi, Gasparoni (Andreini 60), Manuel Marani, Selva.
Rep Ireland: Henderson - Finnan, Dunne, O'Shea (McShane 46), Harte (Hunt 74), Duff, Carsley, Ireland, Kilbane, Keane, Long (Stokes 81).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	4	3	1	0	19	2	10
Czech Rep	4	3	1	0	13	2	10
Rep Ireland	5	2	1	2	10	8	7
Slovakia	4	2	0	2	12	9	6
Cyprus	4	1	1	2	8	12	4
Wales	3	1	0	2	5	8	3
San Marino	4	0	0	4	1	27	0

02.09.06 Czech Republic-Wales 2-1
02.09.06 Germany-Rep Ireland 1-0
02.09.06 Slovakia-Cyprus 6-1
06.09.06 San Marino-Germany 0-13
06.09.06 Slovakia-Czech Republic 0-3
07.10.06 Cyprus-Rep Ireland 5-2
07.10.06 Czech Republic-San Marino 7-0
07.10.06 Wales-Slovakia 1-5
11.10.06 Rep Ireland-Czech Republic 1-1
11.10.06 Slovakia-Germany 1-4
11.10.06 Wales-Cyprus 3-1
15.11.06 Cyprus-Germany 1-1
15.11.06 Rep Ireland-San Marino 5-0
07.02.07 San Marino-Rep Ireland 1-2
24.03.07 Cyprus-Slovakia
24.03.07 Czech Republic-Germany
24.03.07 Rep Ireland-Wales
28.03.07 Czech Republic-Cyprus
28.03.07 Rep Ireland-Slovakia
28.03.07 Wales-San Marino
02.06.07 Germany-San Marino
02.06.07 Wales-Czech Republic
06.06.07 Germany-Slovakia
22.08.07 San Marino-Cyprus
08.09.07 San Marino-Czech Republic
08.09.07 Slovakia-Rep Ireland
08.09.07 Wales-Germany
12.09.07 Cyprus-San Marino
12.09.07 Czech Republic-Rep Ireland
12.09.07 Slovakia-Wales
13.10.07 Cyprus-Wales
13.10.07 Rep Ireland-Germany
13.10.07 Slovakia-San Marino
17.10.07 Germany-Czech Republic
17.10.07 Rep Ireland-Cyprus
17.10.07 San Marino-Wales
17.11.07 Czech Republic-Slovakia
17.11.07 Germany-Cyprus
17.11.07 Wales-Rep Ireland
21.11.07 Cyprus-Czech Republic
21.11.07 Germany-Wales
21.11.07 San Marino-Slovakia

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	4	3	1	0	13	3	10
Russia	4	2	2	0	5	1	8
England	4	2	1	1	6	2	7
Macedonia	5	2	1	2	4	3	7
Israel	4	2	1	1	9	6	7
Estonia	3	0	0	3	0	4	0
Andorra	4	0	0	4	1	19	0

16.08.06 Estonia-Macedonia 0-1
02.09.06 England-Andorra 5-0
02.09.06 Estonia-Israel 0-1
06.09.06 Israel-Andorra 4-1
06.09.06 Macedonia-England 0-1
06.09.06 Russia-Croatia 0-0
07.10.06 Croatia-Andorra 7-0
07.10.06 England-Macedonia 0-0
07.10.06 Russia-Israel 1-1
11.10.06 Andorra-Macedonia 0-3
11.10.06 Croatia-England 2-0
11.10.06 Russia-Estonia 2-0
15.11.06 Israel-Croatia 3-4
15.11.06 Macedonia-Russia 0-2
24.03.07 Croatia-Macedonia
24.03.07 Estonia-Russia
24.03.07 Israel-England
28.03.07 Andorra-England
28.03.07 Israel-Estonia
02.06.07 Estonia-Croatia
02.06.07 Macedonia-Israel
02.06.07 Russia-Andorra
06.06.07 Andorra-Israel
06.06.07 Croatia-Russia
06.06.07 Estonia-England
22.08.07 Estonia-Andorra
08.09.07 Croatia-Estonia
08.09.07 England-Israel
08.09.07 Russia-Macedonia
12.09.07 Andorra-Croatia
12.09.07 England-Russia
12.09.07 Macedonia-Estonia
13.10.07 England-Estonia
17.10.07 Croatia-Israel
17.10.07 Macedonia-Andorra
17.10.07 Russia-England
17.11.07 Andorra-Estonia
17.11.07 Israel-Russia
17.11.07 Macedonia-Croatia
21.11.07 Andorra-Russia
21.11.07 England-Croatia
21.11.07 Israel-Macedonia

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	4	4	0	0	8	2	12
Denmark	3	2	1	0	6	0	7
N Ireland	4	2	1	1	4	5	7
Latvia	3	1	0	2	4	2	3
Spain	3	1	0	2	6	5	3
Iceland	4	1	0	3	4	8	3
Liechtenstein	3	0	0	3	1	11	0

02.09.06 Latvia-Sweden 0-1
02.09.06 Northern Ireland-Iceland 0-3
02.09.06 Spain-Liechtenstein 4-0
06.09.06 Iceland-Denmark 0-2
06.09.06 Northern Ireland-Spain 3-2
06.09.06 Sweden-Liechtenstein 3-1
07.10.06 Denmark-Northern Ireland 0-0
07.10.06 Latvia-Iceland 4-0
07.10.06 Sweden-Spain 2-0
11.10.06 Iceland-Sweden 1-2
11.10.06 Liechtenstein-Denmark 0-4
11.10.06 Northern Ireland-Latvia 1-0
24.03.07 Liechtenstein-N Ireland
24.03.07 Spain-Denmark
28.03.07 Liechtenstein-Latvia
28.03.07 Northern Ireland-Sweden
28.03.07 Spain-Iceland
02.06.07 Denmark-Sweden
02.06.07 Iceland-Liechtenstein
02.06.07 Latvia-Spain
06.06.07 Latvia-Denmark
06.06.07 Liechtenstein-Spain
06.06.07 Sweden-Iceland
22.08.07 N Ireland-Liechtenstein
08.09.07 Iceland-Spain
08.09.07 Latvia-Northern Ireland
08.09.07 Sweden-Denmark
12.09.07 Denmark-Liechtenstein
12.09.07 Iceland-Northern Ireland
12.09.07 Spain-Latvia
13.10.07 Denmark-Spain
13.10.07 Iceland-Latvia
13.10.07 Liechtenstein-Sweden
17.10.07 Denmark-Latvia
17.10.07 Liechtenstein-Iceland
17.10.07 Sweden-Northern Ireland
17.11.07 Latvia-Liechtenstein
17.11.07 Northern Ireland-Denmark
17.11.07 Spain-Sweden
21.11.07 Denmark-Iceland
21.11.07 Spain-Northern Ireland
21.11.07 Sweden-Latvia

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	4	3	1	0	7	2	10
Bulgaria	4	2	2	0	7	3	8
Romania	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Belarus	4	1	1	2	7	10	4
Slovenia	3	1	0	2	4	7	3
Albania	3	0	1	2	3	6	1
Luxembourg	3	0	0	3	0	4	0

02.09.06 Belarus-Albania 2-2
02.09.06 Luxembourg-Holland 0-1
02.09.06 Romania-Bulgaria 2-2
06.09.06 Albania-Romania 0-2
06.09.06 Bulgaria-Slovenia 3-0
06.09.06 Holland-Belarus 3-0
07.10.06 Bulgaria-Holland 1-1
07.10.06 Romania-Belarus 3-1
07.10.06 Slovenia-Luxembourg 2-0
11.10.06 Belarus-Slovenia 4-2
11.10.06 Holland-Albania 2-1
11.10.06 Luxembourg-Bulgaria 0-1
24.03.07 Albania-Slovenia
24.03.07 Holland-Romania
24.03.07 Luxembourg-Belarus
28.03.07 Bulgaria-Albania
28.03.07 Romania-Luxembourg
28.03.07 Slovenia-Holland
02.06.07 Albania-Luxembourg
02.06.07 Belarus-Bulgaria
02.06.07 Slovenia-Romania
06.06.07 Bulgaria-Belarus
06.06.07 Luxembourg-Albania
06.06.07 Romania-Slovenia
08.09.07 Belarus-Romania
08.09.07 Holland-Bulgaria
08.09.07 Luxembourg-Slovenia
12.09.07 Albania-Holland
12.09.07 Bulgaria-Luxembourg
12.09.07 Slovenia-Belarus
13.10.07 Belarus-Luxembourg
13.10.07 Romania-Holland
13.10.07 Slovenia-Albania
17.10.07 Albania-Bulgaria
17.10.07 Holland-Slovenia
17.10.07 Luxembourg-Romania
17.11.07 Albania-Belarus
17.11.07 Bulgaria-Romania
17.11.07 Holland-Luxembourg
21.11.07 Belarus-Holland
21.11.07 Romania-Albania
21.11.07 Slovenia-Bulgaria

Top two in each group qualify for finals. Austria and Switzerland qualify automatically as co-hosts. Finals tournament: June 7-29, 2008

2008 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	1	1	0	0	5	0	3
Gabon	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Madagascar	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

Djibouti withdrew

02.09.06 Gabon-Madagascar 4-0
08.10.06 Ivory Coast-Gabon 5-0
24.03.07 Madagascar-Ivory Coast
02.06.07 Ivory Coast-Madagascar
16.06.07 Madagascar-Gabon
08.09.07 Gabon-Ivory Coast

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Mauritania	2	1	0	1	5	3	3
Burundi	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Botswana	2	0	1	1	0	4	1

02.09.06 Egypt-Burundi 4-1
02.09.06 Mauritania-Botswana 4-0
07.10.06 Botswana-Egypt 0-0
08.10.06 Burundi-Mauritania 3-1
24.03.07 Botswana-Burundi
24.03.07 Egypt-Mauritania
02.06.07 Burundi-Botswana
02.06.07 Mauritania-Egypt
16.06.07 Botswana-Mauritania
16.06.07 Burundi-Egypt
08.09.07 Egypt-Botswana
08.09.07 Mauritania-Burundi

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Uganda	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Niger	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Lesotho	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

02.09.06 Nigeria-Niger 2-0
02.09.06 Uganda-Lesotho 3-0
08.10.06 Lesotho-Nigeria 0-1
08.10.06 Niger-Uganda 0-0
24.03.07 Lesotho-Niger
24.03.07 Nigeria-Uganda
02.06.07 Niger-Lesotho
02.06.07 Uganda-Nigeria
16.06.07 Lesotho-Uganda
16.06.07 Niger-Nigeria
08.09.07 Nigeria-Lesotho
08.09.07 Uganda-Niger

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Sudan	2	1	0	1	3	1	3
Seychelles	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Mauritius	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

03.09.06 Mauritius-Tunisia 0-0
03.09.06 Sudan-Seychelles 3-0
07.10.06 Seychelles-Mauritius 2-1
07.10.06 Tunisia-Sudan 1-0
24.03.07 Mauritius-Sudan
24.03.07 Seychelles-Tunisia
02.06.07 Sudan-Mauritius
02.06.07 Tunisia-Seychelles
16.06.07 Seychelles-Sudan
16.06.07 Tunisia-Mauritius
08.09.07 Mauritius-Seychelles
08.09.07 Sudan-Tunisia

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Liberia	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Eq Guinea	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Rwanda	2	0	0	2	2	6	0

03.09.06 Equatorial Guinea-Liberia 2-1
03.09.06 Rwanda-Cameroon 0-3
07.10.06 Cameroon-Equatorial Guinea 3-0
08.10.06 Liberia-Rwanda 3-2
24.03.07 Cameroon-Liberia
24.03.07 Equatorial Guinea-Rwanda
02.06.07 Liberia-Cameroon
02.06.07 Rwanda-Equatorial Guinea
16.06.07 Cameroon-Rwanda
16.06.07 Liberia-Equatorial Guinea
08.09.07 Equatorial Guinea-Cameroon
08.09.07 Rwanda-Liberia

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Eritrea	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Swaziland	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Kenya	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

02.09.06 Kenya-Eritrea 1-2
03.09.06 Swaziland-Angola 0-2
08.10.06 Angola-Kenya 3-1
08.10.06 Eritrea-Swaziland 0-0
24.03.07 Angola-Eritrea
24.03.07 Kenya-Swaziland
02.06.07 Eritrea-Angola
02.06.07 Swaziland-Kenya
16.06.07 Angola-Swaziland
16.06.07 Eritrea-Kenya
08.09.07 Kenya-Angola
08.09.07 Swaziland-Eritrea

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tanzania	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Senegal	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Burkina Faso	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Mozambique	2	0	1	1	0	2	1

02.09.06 Senegal-Mozambique 2-0
02.09.06 Tanzania-Burkina Faso 2-1
07.10.06 Burkina Faso-Senegal 1-0
08.10.06 Mozambique-Tanzania 0-0
24.03.07 Burkina Faso-Mozambique
24.03.07 Senegal-Tanzania
02.06.07 Mozambique-Burkina Faso
02.06.07 Tanzania-Senegal
16.06.07 Burkina Faso-Tanzania
16.06.07 Mozambique-Senegal
08.09.07 Senegal-Burkina Faso
08.09.07 Tanzania-Mozambique

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Algeria	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Gambia	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Cape Verde Is	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Guinea	2	0	1	1	0	1	1

03.09.06 Gambia-Cape Verde Islands 2-0
03.09.06 Guinea-Algeria 0-0
07.10.06 Algeria-Gambia 1-0
08.10.06 Cape Verde Islands-Guinea 1-0
24.03.07 Algeria-Cape Verde Islands
24.03.07 Gambia-Guinea
02.06.07 Cape Verde Islands-Algeria
02.06.07 Guinea-Gambia
16.06.07 Algeria-Guinea
16.06.07 Cape Verde Islands-Gambia
08.09.07 Gambia-Algeria
08.09.07 Guinea-Cape Verde Islands

Group 9

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Benin	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Togo	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Sierra Leone	2	0	1	1	0	2	1

03.09.06 Sierra Leone-Mali 0-0
03.09.06 Togo-Benin 2-1
08.10.06 Benin-Sierra Leone 2-0
08.10.06 Mali-Togo 1-0
24.03.07 Mali-Benin
24.03.07 Togo-Sierra Leone
02.06.07 Benin-Mali
02.06.07 Sierra Leone-Togo
16.06.07 Benin-Togo
16.06.07 Mali-Sierra Leone
08.09.07 Sierra Leone-Benin
08.09.07 Togo-Mali

Group 10

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Namibia	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Ethiopia	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Libya	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

03.09.06 DR Congo-Namibia 3-2
03.09.06 Ethiopia-Libya 1-0
07.10.06 Namibia-Ethiopia 1-0
08.10.06 Libya-DR Congo 1-1
24.03.07 DR Congo-Ethiopia
24.03.07 Libya-Namibia
02.06.07 Ethiopia-DR Congo
02.06.07 Namibia-Libya
16.06.07 Libya-Ethiopia
16.06.07 Namibia-DR Congo
08.09.07 DR Congo-Libya
08.09.07 Ethiopia-Namibia

Group 11

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Congo	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
South Africa	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Zambia	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Chad	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

02.09.06 South Africa-Congo 0-0
03.09.06 Chad-Zambia 0-2
07.10.06 Congo-Chad 3-0
07.10.06 Zambia-South Africa 0-1
24.03.07 Chad-South Africa
24.03.07 Congo-Zambia
02.06.07 South Africa-Chad
02.06.07 Zambia-Congo
16.06.07 Congo-South Africa
16.06.07 Zambia-Chad
08.09.07 Chad-Congo
08.09.07 South Africa-Zambia

Group 12

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Malawi	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Zimbabwe	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

02.09.06 Morocco-Malawi 2-0
07.10.06 Malawi-Zimbabwe 1-0
24.03.07 Zimbabwe-Morocco
02.06.07 Morocco-Zimbabwe
16.06.07 Malawi-Morocco
08.09.07 Zimbabwe-Malawi

Group winners and the three best runners-up qualify for finals. Ghana qualify automatically as hosts. Finals tournament: January 20-February 10, 2008

CLUB FOOTBALL EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group stage – final standings

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	6	4	1	1	10	4	13
Barcelona	6	3	2	1	12	4	11
Werder	6	3	1	2	7	5	10
Levski	6	0	0	6	1	17	0

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	6	3	3	0	10	3	12
Inter	6	3	1	2	5	5	10
Spartak	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Sporting	6	1	2	3	3	6	5

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
PSV	6	3	1	2	6	6	10
Bordeaux	6	2	1	3	6	7	7
Galatasaray	6	1	1	4	7	12	4

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valencia	6	4	1	1	12	6	13
Roma	6	3	1	2	8	4	10
Shakhtar	6	1	3	2	6	11	6
Olympiakos	6	0	3	3	6	11	3

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	6	4	2	0	12	3	14
Real Madrid	6	3	2	1	14	8	11
Steaua	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Kyiv Dynamo	6	0	2	4	5	16	2

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	6	4	0	2	10	5	12
Celtic	6	3	0	3	8	9	9
Benfica	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Copenhagen	6	2	1	3	5	8	7

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	6	3	2	1	7	3	11
Porto	6	3	2	1	9	4	11
CSKA Moscow	6	2	2	2	4	5	8
Hamburg	6	1	0	5	7	15	3

Group H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	6	3	1	2	8	4	10
Lille	6	2	3	1	8	5	9
AEK	6	2	2	2	6	9	8
Anderlecht	6	0	4	2	7	11	4

Top two in each group qualified for 1st knockout round; third-placed sides entered UEFA Cup

1st knockout round draw

Barcelona (Spa) v Liverpool (Eng)**
Celtic (Sco) v Milan (Ita)*
Internazionale (Ita) v Valencia (Spa)**
Lille (Fra) v Manchester United (Eng)*
FC Porto (Por) v Chelsea (Eng)**
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) v Arsenal (Eng)*
Real Madrid (Spa) v Bayern Munich (Ger)*
Roma (Ita) v Lyon (Fra)**

**1st legs - Feb 20; 2nd legs - Mar 7*
***1st legs - Feb 21; 2nd legs - Mar 6*

UEFA CUP

Group stage – final standings

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	4	3	1	0	8	4	10
Maccabi Haifa	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Livorno	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Auxerre	4	1	1	2	7	7	4
Partizan	4	0	1	3	2	7	1

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tottenham	4	4	0	0	9	2	12
Dinamo Buc'st	4	2	1	1	6	6	7
B Leverkusen	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Besiktas	4	1	0	3	4	7	3
Club Brugge	4	0	2	2	4	7	2

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AZ	4	3	1	0	12	5	10
Sevilla	4	2	1	1	7	2	7
Sporting Braga	4	2	0	2	6	5	6
Slovan Liberec	4	1	2	1	6	7	5
Grasshopper	4	0	0	4	3	15	0

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Parma	4	3	0	1	6	6	9
Osasuna	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
Lens	4	1	1	2	5	5	4
OB Odense	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Heerenveen	4	1	1	2	2	4	4

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Blackburn	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Nancy	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
Feyenoord*	4	1	2	1	4	5	5
Wisla Krakow	4	1	0	3	6	8	3
Basle	4	0	2	2	4	9	2

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Espanyol	4	4	0	0	11	2	12
Ajax	4	2	1	1	6	2	7
Zulte-Waregem	4	2	0	2	9	11	6
Sparta Prague	4	1	1	2	2	5	4
Austria Wien	4	0	0	4	1	9	0

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	4	2	1	1	3	4	7
Paris SG	4	1	2	1	6	4	5
H Tel Aviv	4	1	2	1	7	7	5
Rapid Buc'st	4	0	4	0	3	3	4
Mlada Boleslav	4	0	3	1	2	3	3

Group H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Newcastle	4	3	1	0	4	1	10
Celta Vigo	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
Fenerbahce	4	1	1	2	5	4	4
Palermo	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
E Frankfurt	4	0	3	1	4	5	3

Top three in each group qualified for 1st knockout round, along with the eight third-placed teams from the Champions League group stage
**Feyenoord (Hol) were excluded after the 1st knockout round draw had been made because of the trouble caused by their fans at the group match away to Nancy. Tottenham (Eng), Feyenoord's prospective opponents in 1st knockout round match 7, were given a bye to the 2nd knockout round*

1st knockout round draw

Zulte-Waregem (Blg) v Newcastle (Eng) (1)
Sporting Braga (Por) v Parma (Ita) (2)
Lens (Fra) v Panathinaikos (Gre) (3)
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Blackburn (Eng) (4)
Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) v Rangers (Sco) (5)
Livorno (Ita) v Espanyol (Spa) (6)
Fenerbahce (Tur) v AZ Alkmaar (Hol) (8)
Werder Bremen (Ger) v Ajax (Hol) (9)
Spartak Moscow (Rus) v Celta Vigo (Spa) (10)
CSKA Moscow (Rus) v Maccabi Haifa (Isr) (11)
AEK Athens (Gre) v Paris St-Germain (Fra) (12)
Benfica (Por) v Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) (13)
Steaua Bucharest (Rom) v Sevilla (Spa) (14)
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) v Nancy (Fra) (15)
Bordeaux (Fra) v Osasuna (Spa) (16)

1st legs - Feb 14/15; 2nd legs - Feb 22

2nd knockout round draw

match 1 winners v match 8 winners
match 11 winners v match 6 winners
match 5 winners v match 16 winners
match 2 winners v Tottenham
match 14 winners v match 15 winners
match 3 winners v match 4 winners
match 12 winners v match 13 winners
match 10 winners v match 9 winners

1st legs - Mar 8; 2nd legs - Mar 15

ROYAL LEAGUE

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brann	5	2	3	0	11	8	9
Helsingborgs	5	2	3	0	8	5	9
OB	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Rosenborg	6	0	1	5	7	15	1

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lillestrom	6	3	3	0	7	3	12
Brondby	4	2	2	0	8	5	8
Copenhagen	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Hammarby	5	0	1	4	5	11	1

Group 3 (Final)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valerenga	6	4	2	0	13	8	14
Elfsborg	6	2	2	2	11	8	8
AIK	6	1	3	2	7	12	6
Viborg	6	0	3	3	6	9	3

Top two in each group qualify for quarter-finals, plus the two third-placed teams with the best record

AUSTRIA

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salzburg	21	13	5	3	44	12	44
Mattersburg	21	10	4	7	30	33	34
Pasching	21	8	7	6	25	23	31
Wacker Tirol	21	7	7	7	22	27	28
Altach	21	8	3	10	31	36	27
SV Ried	21	5	10	6	22	22	25
Grazer AK	21	5	9	7	27	33	24
Rapid Wien	21	5	8	8	27	31	23
Sturm Graz*	21	7	4	10	20	27	22
Austria Wien	21	4	9	8	21	25	21

**3pts deducted for licence application irregularities*

BELGIUM

Friday, January 19
Zulte-Waregem 2 (Matthijs 40, pen 86)
Genk 2 (Leleu og 51, og 60) Att: 8,500

Saturday, January 20
Anderlecht 2 (Hassan 28, Tchite 79)
St Truiden 0 Att: 24,119

Beveren 1 (Dissa 81)
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Dheedene 52) Att: 4,000

Cercle Brugge 2 (Dekelver 55, Boi 62)
Mouscron 1 (Dugardein 5) Att: 4,100

Lierse 2 (Andic 41, Jarju 74)
Charleroi 1 (Chabaud 88) Att: 6,600

Mons 1 (Wiggers 89)
FC Brussels 1 (Tehoue 61) Att: 4,500

Roeselare 2 (Annys 15, Oris 85)
Westerlo 0 Att: 4,300

Sunday, January 21
Gent 0
Club Brugge 0 Att: 12,407

Standard 3 (Jovanovic pen 43, Geraerts 73, Defour 90)
Lokeren 1 (Bouabe 45) Att: 25,000

Friday, January 26
Charleroi 2 (Perbet 24, 30)
Standard 5 (Jovanovic 13, Sergio Conceicao 38, Defays og 55, De Camargo 69, Geraerts 75) Att: 22,000

Saturday, January 27
FC Brussels 2 (Matumona 59, Owona 69)
Zulte-Waregem 0 Att: 5,000

Club Brugge 0
Roeselare 1 (De Vleeschauwer 89) Att: 25,752

Genk 3 (Vandenbergh 39, Vrancken 44, Haroun 62)
Lierse 0 Att: 22,436

Lokeren 2 (Tambwe 70, 90)
Cercle Brugge 0 Att: 4,500

Mouscron 0
Gent 3 (Gregoire 41, Olufade pen 57, Rudi 83) Att: 5,100

St Truiden 1 (Van Houdt 85)
Mons 0 Att: 6,000

Westerlo 2 (Ogunsoto 4, Copa og 76)
Beveren 0 Att: 3,000

Sunday, January 28
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Sterchele 72)
Anderlecht 3 (Tchite 43, 60, Wasilewski 81) Att: 12,300

Friday, February 2
Beveren 0
Club Brugge 2 (Balaban 67, 90) Att: 7,000

Saturday, February 3
Anderlecht 1 (Wasilewski 18)
Westerlo 0 Att: 24,638

Cercle Brugge 0
Charleroi 0 Att: 6,000

Gent 3 (Olufade pen 53, Gillet 80, 87)
Lokeren 1 (Tambwe 25) Att: 8,000

Lierse 1 (Jarju 70)
Zulte-Waregem 0 Att: 8,625

Mons 2 (Dahmane pen 26, 75)
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Colman 86) Att: 4,000

Roeselare 2 (El Araichi pen 34, Oyen 80)
Mouscron 1 (Hatchi 53) Att: 4,000

St Truiden 2 (Munyaneza 28, Sishuba 70)
FC Brussels 2 (Matumona 63, Citony 75) Att: 6,000

Sunday, February 4
Standard 2 (Jovanovic pen 32, De Camargo 49)
Genk 1 (Haroun 62) Att: 26,000

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	20	14	4	2	39	18	46
Genk	20	13	5	2	44	20	44
Standard	20	12	4	4	42	24	40
Gent	20	12	4	4	35	23	40
Club Brugge	20	10	5	5	37	20	35
Roeselare	20	8	6	6	32	30	30
Charleroi	20	8	6	6	26	24	30
Westerlo	20	8	4	8	24	25	28
St Truiden	20	7	3	10	26	30	24
Germinal B	20	6	6	8	23	30	24
Cercle Brugge	20	6	4	10	16	21	22
Zulte-Waregem	20	5	7	8	22	28	22
FC Brussels	20	4	9	7	21	25	21
Mons	20	5	5	10	17	27	20
Lokeren	20	4	7	9	16	26	19
Mouscron	20	4	7	9	25	36	19
Beveren	20	4	5	11	16	30	17
Lierse	20	3	3	14	13	37	12

LEADING GOALSCORERS
15 Mohammed Tchite (Anderlecht)
14 Patrick Ogunsoto (Westerlo)
13 Bosko Balaban (Club Brugge)
11 Milan Jovanovic (Standard)
11 Francois Sterchele (Germinal Beerschot)

BELGIAN CUP – last 16

Jan 13: Anderlecht 5 Dender 2; Club Brugge 1 Westerlo 0; Genk 1 Mouscron 0; Lierse 1 Royal Antwerp 4; Roeselare 2 Gent 3; Standard 5 Hamme 0.
Jan 14: Kortrijk 4 St Truiden 2; Mechelen 1 Zulte-Waregem 0.

BULGARIA

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Levski	15	12	3	0	39	2	39
CSKA	15	12	1	2	36	7	37
Lok Sofia	15	10	3	2	31	13	33
Lovech	15	8	5	2	20	12	29
Cherno More	15	7	3	5	24	13	24
Slavia	15	6	5	4	24	19	23
Botev	15	7	1	7	24	24	22
Beroe	15	6	2	7	22	18	20
Vihren	15	6	2	7	15	17	20
Spartak Varna	15	6	1	8	15	30	19
Lok Plovdiv	15	5	3	7	18	19	18
Marek	15	4	4	7	20	30	16
Belasitsa	15	4	3	8	19	22	15
Rilski	15	5	0	10	15	29	15
Rodopa	15	3	1	11	14	26	10
Chernomorets*	15	0	1	14	4	59	-2

**3pts deducted for failing to register enough youth players*

CROATIA

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	18	15	2	1	46	14	47
Hajduk	18	14	2	2	32	10	44
Zagreb	18	10	1	7	27	19	31
Sibenik	18	9	3	6	29	22	30
Varteks	18	8	3	7	29	31	27
Medimurje	18	8	1	9	25	29	25
Rijeka	18	7	2	9	29	31	23
Slaven	18	7	2	9	19	23	23
Osijek	18	5	7	6	18	26	22
Pula	18	4	6	8	18	23	18
Cibalia	18	3	2	13	16	33	11
Kamen Ingrad	18	2	1	15	17	44	7

CZECH REPUBLIC

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	17	10	6	1	20	6	36
Slavia	17	10	4	3	29	15	34
Liberec	17	9	6	2	24	9	33
Mlada Boleslav	17	9	3	5	26	20	30
Jablonec	17	6	7	4	21	18	25
Brno	17	6	7	4	15	16	25
C Budejovice	17	7	4	6	19	22	25
Teplice	17	6	6	5	30	24	24
Ostrava	17	5	6	6	23	23	21
Plzen	17	5	6	6	18	20	21
Most	17	4	7	6	21	24	19
Olomouc	17	5	3	9	17	23	18
Kladno	17	5	3	9	16	27	18
Zlin	17	3	5	9	11	21	14
Pribram	17	2	7	8	11	21	13
Slovacko	17	1	6	10	11	23	9

DENMARK

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Copenhagen	18	13	4	1	35	12	43
Midtjylland	18	11	4	3	36	20	37
OB	18	10	5	3	24	15	35
AaB	18	9	4	5	23	17	31
Nordsjaelland	18	9	3	6	35	20	30
Esbjerg	18	7	5	6	31	29	26
Brondby	18	6	6	6	24	21	24
Randers	18	6	4	8	24	26	22
Viborg	18	5	3	10	18	35	18
Horsens	18	3	7	8	12	23	16
Vejle	18	2	3	13	19	42	9
Silkeborg	18	2	2	14	15	36	8

ENGLAND

Saturday, January 13
Blackburn 0
Arsenal 2 (Toure 37, Henry 71) Att: 21,852

Bolton 0
Manchester City 0 Att: 22,334

Charlton 1 (Hasselbaink 27)
Middlesbrough 3 (Cattermole 45, Arca 64, Aiyegbeni 68) Att: 26,384

Chelsea 4 (Lampard 14, Robben 63, Kirkland og 69, Drogba 90)
Wigan 0 Att: 40,846

Manchester United 3 (Park 11, Carrick 13, Cristiano Ronaldo 35)
Aston Villa 1 (Agbonlahor 52) Att: 76,073

Sheffield United 1 (S Quinn 22)
Portsmouth 1 (O'Neill 81) Att: 30,269

Watford 0
Liverpool 3 (Bellamy 34, Crouch 40, 48) Att: 19,746

West Ham 3 (Zamora 28, Benayoun 46, 64)
Fulham 3 (Radzinski 16, McBride 59, Christanval 90) Att: 34,977

Sunday, January 14
Everton 1 (Johnson 81)
Reading 1 (Lescott og 28) Att: 34,722

Tottenham 2 (Defoe 14, Berbatov 54)
Newcastle 3 (Huntington 16, Martins 72, Butt 73) Att: 35,942

Saturday, January 20
Aston Villa 2 (Mahon og 86, Agbonlahor 90)
Watford 0 Att: 35,892

Fulham 1 (Montella pen 84)
Tottenham 1 (Chimbonda 88) Att: 23,580

Liverpool 2 (Kuijt 4, Pennant 18)
Chelsea 0 Att: 44,245

Manchester City 0
Blackburn 3 (Gamst Pedersen 44, 62, Derbyshire 90) Att: 36,950

Middlesbrough 5 (Speed og 5, Abel Xavier 10, Viduka 23, 84, Downing 43)
Bolton 1 (Nolan 25) Att: 24,614

Newcastle 2 (Milner 45, Solano pen 53)
West Ham 2 (Cole 19, Harewood 22) Att: 52,095

Portsmouth 0
Charlton 1 (Faye 79) Att: 19,567

Reading 3 (Long 44, De la Cruz 50, Hunt 70)
Sheffield United 1 (Nade 77) Att: 23,956

Sunday, January 21
Arsenal 2 (Van Persie 83, Henry 90)
Manchester United 1 (Rooney 53) Att: 60,128

Wigan 0
Everton 2 (Arteta pen 64, 90) Att: 18,149

Tuesday, January 23
Watford 2 (Emerton og 12, Demerit 70)
Blackburn 1 (McCarthy 45) Att: 13,760

Tuesday, January 30
Portsmouth 0
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 19,820

Reading 3 (Ingimarsson 31, Long 51, Lita 88)
Wigan 2 (Heskey 3, Landzaat 90) Att: 21,954

Sheffield United 2 (Stead 23, Tonge 28)
Fulham 0 Att: 27,540

West Ham 1 (Kepa 77)
Liverpool 2 (Kuijt 46, Crouch 53) Att: 34,966

Wednesday, January 31
Bolton 1 (Pedersen 6)
Charlton 1 (El-Karkouri 12) Att: 22,357

Chelsea 3 (Drogba 6, Lampard 67, Kalou 90)
Blackburn 0 Att: 38,000

Manchester United 4 (Cristiano Ronaldo pen 20, Doyley og 60, Larsson 70, Rooney 71)
Watford 0 Att: 76,032

Newcastle 3 (Milner 5, Dyer 7, Sibierski 90)
Aston Villa 1 (Young 25) Att: 49,201

Saturday, February 3
Aston Villa 1 (Carew 36)
West Ham 0 Att: 41,202

Blackburn 2 (Gamst Pedersen 27, 90)
Sheffield United 1 (Stead 25) Att: 20,917

Charlton 0
Chelsea 1 (Lampard 18) Att: 27,111

Fulham 2 (Helguson 49, McBride 73)
Newcastle 1 (Martins 90) Att: 24,340

Liverpool 0
Everton 0 Att: 44,234

Manchester City 0
Reading 2 (Lita 79, 89) Att: 38,676

Middlesbrough 1 (Aiyegbeni pen 63)
Arsenal 1 (Henry 77) Att: 31,122

Watford 0
Bolton 1 (Anelka 63) Att: 18,722

Wigan 1 (McCulloch 68)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 15,093

Sunday, February 4
Tottenham 0
Manchester United 4 (Cristiano Ronaldo pen 45, Vidic 48, Scholes 54, Giggs 77) Att: 36,146

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	26	20	3	3	61	18	63
Chelsea	26	17	6	3	45	19	57
Liverpool	26	15	5	6	39	17	50
Arsenal	25	13	7	5	46	21	46
Bolton	26	13	5	8	30	27	44
Reading	26	12	4	10	39	34	40
Portsmouth	26	10	8	8	34	25	38
Everton	25	9	9	7	31	23	36
Blackburn	26	10	4	12	30	37	34
Newcastle	26	9	6	11	32	35	33
Tottenham	25	9	6	10	29	36	33
Middlesbrough	26	8	8	10	30	30	32
Aston Villa	26	7	11	8	28	31	32
Fulham	26	7	11	8	28	39	32
Man City	25	8	6	11	19	30	30
Sheffield Utd	26	7	6	13	22	35	27
Wigan	25	7	4	14	26	41	25
West Ham	26	5	5	16	18	41	20
Charlton	26	5	5	16	20	45	20
Watford	25	2	9	14	14	37	15

LEADING GOALSCORERS
15 Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United)
15 Didier Drogba (Chelsea)
11 Yakubu Aiyegbeni (Middlesbrough)
11 Robin Van Persie (Arsenal)
10 Kevin Doyle (Reading)
10 Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
10 Frank Lampard (Chelsea)
10 Benni McCarthy (Blackburn)
10 Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)

FA CUP – 3rd round (last 64)

Replays
Jan 16: Barnsley 0 Southend 2; Coventry 0 Bristol City 2; Ipswich 1 Chester 0; Manchester City 2 Sheffield Wednesday 1; Middlesbrough 4 Hull 3; Oldham 0 Wolverhampton 2; Plymouth 2 Peterborough 1.
Jan 17: Fulham 4 Leicester 3; Newcastle 1 Birmingham 5; Tottenham 4 Cardiff 0.
Jan 23: Luton 1 QPR 0.

ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES TEAM OF THE MONTH JANUARY 2007

La Gazzetta dello Sport · don balon · kicker SPORTMAGAZIN · СПОРТ-ЭКСПРЕСС SPORT-EXPRESS · FOOT MAGAZINE · WORLD SOCCER · A BOLA · voetbal INTERNATIONAL · FANATIK

HOW THEY VOTED

A BOLA (Por)
Julio Cesar (Inter); Burdisso (Inter), Ferdinand (Man Utd), Maxwell (Inter); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Ribery (Marseille), Stankovic (Inter), Xavi (Barcelona); Drogba (Chelsea), Cisse (Marseille), Ibrahimovic (Inter)

FANATIK (Tur)
Julio Cesar (Inter); Cris (Lyon), Toure (Arsenal), Marquez (Barcelona); Diarra (Real Madrid), Ricardinho (Besiktas), Arizmendi (Deportivo La Coruna), Adebayor (Arsenal); Rooney (Man Utd), Ibrahimovic (Inter), Klose (Werder Bremen)

GAZZETTA DELLO SPORT (Ita)
Buffon (Juventus); Maicon (Inter), Toure (Arsenal), Pepe (Porto), Grygera (Ajax); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Vieira (Inter), Stankovic (Inter), Scholes (Man Utd); Kanoute (Sevilla), Ibrahimovic (Inter)

SPORT-EXPRESS (Rus)
Reina (Liverpool); Carragher (Liverpool), Materazzi (Inter), Burdisso (Inter); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Albelda (Valencia), Gerrard (Liverpool), Stankovic (Inter); Kanoute (Sevilla), Saviola (Barcelona), Kuijt (Liverpool)

WORLD SOCCER (UK)
Buffon (Juventus); Abidal (Lyon), Toure (Arsenal), Vidic (Man Utd); Ribery (Marseille), Albelda (Valencia), Fabregas (Arsenal), Scholes (Man Utd); Saviola (Barcelona), Ibrahimovic (Inter), Guiza (Getafe)

DON BALON (Spa)
Reina (Liverpool); Materazzi (Inter), Chivu (Roma), Schmitz (Lille); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Julio Baptista (Arsenal), Lampard (Chelsea), Nasri (Marseille); Ibrahimovic (Inter), Kanoute (Sevilla), Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)

FOOT (Blg)
Doni (Roma); Maicon (Inter), Diogo (Zaragoza), Krstajic (Schalke); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Gerrard (Liverpool), Scholes (Man Utd), Aimar (Valencia); Kuranyi (Schalke), Ibrahimovic (Inter), Kuijt (Liverpool)

KICKER (Ger)
Abbondanzieri (Getafe); Maicon (Inter), Vidic (Man Utd), Carragher (Liverpool); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Vieira (Inter), Lampard (Chelsea), Doni (Atalanta); Rooney (Man Utd), Ibrahimovic (Inter), Rocchi (Lazio)

VOETBAL INTERNATIONAL (Hol)
Neuer (Schalke); Maicon (Inter), Materazzi (Inter), Vidic (Man Utd); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Albelda (Valencia), Fabregas (Arsenal), Mancini (Roma); Saviola (Barcelona), Ibrahimovic (Inter), Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)

4th round (last 32)

Jan 27: Barnet 0 Plymouth 2; Birmingham 2 Reading 3; Blackpool 1 Norwich 1; Bristol City 2 Middlesbrough 2; Crystal Palace 0 Preston 2; Derby 1 Bristol Rovers 0; Fulham 3 Stoke 0; Ipswich 1 Swansea 0; Luton 0 Blackburn 4; Manchester United 2 Portsmouth 1; Tottenham 3 Southend 1; West Ham 0 Watford 1.
Jan 28: Arsenal 1 Bolton 1; Chelsea 3 Nottingham Forest 0; Manchester City 3 Southampton 1; Wolverhampton 0 West Bromwich 3.

FRANCE

Saturday, January 13
Auxerre 1 (Jelen 85)
Sochaux 0 Att: 7,066

Bordeaux 1 (Chamakh 86)
Lorient 1 (Saifi 36) Att: 19,809

Le Mans 2 (Matsui 7, 87)
Troyes 0 Att: 8,525

Lens 1 (Jussie 84)
Lille 1 (Bastos 70) Att: 39,460

Nantes 1 (Pieroni 90)
Nice 0 Att: 29,000

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Pauleta 90)
Valenciennes 2 (Savidan 60, Roudet 87) Att: 27,886

Sedan 2 (Marin pen 20, Job 30)
Nancy 2 (Chretien 45, Puygrenier 74) Att: 10,493

Toulouse 2 (Emana 60, Elmander 81)
Lyon 0 Att: 33,940

Sunday, January 14
Rennes 0
Marseille 2 (Cisse 58, Maoulida 90) Att: 29,144

Saint-Etienne 0
Monaco 1 (Koller 65) Att: 32,518

Wednesday, January 17
Paris Saint-Germain 0
Toulouse 0 Att: 29,538

Wednesday, January 24
Lille 1 (Makoun 75)
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Att: 12,950

Lorient 1 (Saifi 50)
Lens 0 Att: 13,117

Lyon 1 (Fred 64)
Bordeaux 2 (Francia pen 3, Micoud 27) Att: 35,305

Marseille 3 (Ribery 8, 38, Taiwo 88)
Auxerre 1 (Jelen 17)
Match played behind closed doors

Monaco 0
Rennes 2 (Briand 50, Didot 79) Att: 6,866

Nice 0
Toulouse 1 (Elmander 24) Att: 8,802

Sochaux 1 (Alvaro Santos 62)
Sedan 1 (Job 21) Att: 9,903

Troyes 1 (Sanz 87)
Nantes 0 Att: 10,511

Valenciennes 1 (Roudet 40)
Le Mans 1 (De Melo 88) Att: 11,716

Thursday, January 25
Nancy 0
Saint-Etienne 2 (Ilan 55, Gomis 71) Att: 17,816

Saturday, January 27
Bordeaux 0
Lille 1 (Chamakh og 78) Att: 23,453

Le Mans 2 (Fanchone 38, Grafite pen 83)
Marseille 0 Att: 15,976

Lyon 1 (Baros 39)
Nice 1 (Kone 35) Att: 33,971

Nantes 0
Lorient 2 (Gignac 21, Abriel 53) Att: 29,860

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Sochaux 0 Att: 31,119

Rennes 1 (Danze 6)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 22,052

Sedan 0
Monaco 1 (Koller 1) Att: 10,851

Toulouse 1 (Arribage 28)
Troyes 1 (Barbosa 7) Att: 15,046

Sunday, January 28
Auxerre 2 (Akale 34, Kahlenberg 37)
Nancy 0 Att: 6,150

Lens 3 (Seydou Keita 66, 90, Coulibaly 89)
Saint-Etienne 3 (Gomis 15, Heinz 23, 44) Att: 30,989

Saturday, February 3
Lille 0
Nantes 0 Att: 14,750

Lorient 2 (Fischer og 53, Marlet 88)
Le Mans 1 (Grafite 45) Att: 12,303

Monaco 2 (Gakpe 36, Piquionne pen 63)
Auxerre 1 (Akale 90) Att: 8,102

Nancy 2 (Curbelo 12, Fortune 75)
Toulouse 1 (Bergougnoux 90) Att: 16,596

Nice 2 (Ederson 12, 26)
Bordeaux 1 (Micoud 36) Att: 10,898

Saint-Etienne 1 (Gomis 9)
Sedan 2 (Job 48, Diatta og 72) Att: 24,838

Sochaux 0
Rennes 0 Att: 10,477

Valenciennes 1 (Savidan pen 61)
Lens 3 (Carriere 28, Seydou Keita 45, Jemaa 90) Att: 16,513

Sunday, February 4
Marseille 1 (Cisse 69)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Pauleta 75) Att: 58,000

Troyes 1 (Nivet 90)
Lyon 0 Att: 14,009

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	23	16	3	4	41	17	51
Lens	23	11	7	5	35	26	40
Lille	23	10	9	4	30	20	39
Marseille	23	11	4	8	31	23	37
Sochaux	23	9	9	5	24	22	36
Saint-Etienne	23	10	5	8	37	29	35
Lorient	23	9	7	7	25	24	34
Nancy	23	9	6	8	21	22	33
Bordeaux	23	10	3	10	25	27	33
Rennes	23	8	8	7	19	18	32
Toulouse	23	9	5	9	25	28	32
Le Mans	23	7	10	6	27	25	31
Monaco	23	8	5	10	27	24	29
Auxerre	23	7	8	8	25	29	29
Valenciennes	23	7	4	12	20	34	25
Troyes	23	5	9	9	23	31	24
Paris SG	23	4	10	9	20	28	22
Nantes	23	4	9	10	17	26	21
Nice	23	4	8	11	18	25	20
Sedan	23	3	9	11	27	39	18

LEADING GOALSCORERS
9 Pauleta (Paris Saint-Germain)
9 Steve Savidan (Valenciennes)
8 Ismael Bangoura (Le Mans)
8 Mathieu Bodmer (Lille)
8 Aruna Dindane (Lens)
8 Araujo Ilan (Saint-Etienne)
8 Mickael Pagis (Marseille)

FRENCH CUP – last 32

Jan 19: Amiens 1 Nantes 3.
Jan 20: Bois-Guillaume 1 Vannes 1 (aet; Vannes 6-5 on pens); Bordeaux 3 Niort 3 (aet; Bordeaux 5-4 on pens); Calais 1 Sedan 2; Clermont Foot 1 Rodez 0; Jarville 3 Libourne/Saint-Seurin 5 (aet); Laon 1 Lyon 3; Le Mans 0 Marseille 1 (aet); Montpellier 1 Nice 1 (aet; Montpellier 4-2 on pens); Orleans 1 Lens 3; Pontivy 0 Montceau 2; Romorantin 1 Valenciennes 2; Sochaux 2 Lyon-la-Duchere 1; Strasbourg 2 Lille 3.
Jan 21: Monaco 2 Toulouse 0; Paris Saint-Germain 1 Gueugnon 0.

Last 16

Jan 30: Libourne/Saint-Seurin 1 Sedan 2; Monaco 0 Sochaux 2; Montpellier 0 Vannes 2 (aet); Paris Saint-Germain 1 Valenciennes 0.
Jan 31: Clermont Foot 1 Lens 4; Marseille 2 Lyon 1; Montceau 2 Bordeaux 2 (aet; Montceau 5-4 on pens); Nantes 1 Lille 0 (aet).

GERMANY

Friday, January 26
Borussia Dortmund 3 (Frei 12, 57, Tinga 59)
Bayern Munich 2 (Van Buyten 25, Makaay 42) Att: 80,708

Saturday, January 27
Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Borges 89)
Hamburg 1 (Ljuboja 10) Att: 26,601

Bochum 0
Mainz 1 (Rose 38) Att: 20,487

Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Takahara 48)
Schalke 3 (Varela 16, Kuranyi 70, 90) Att: 51,500

Energie Cottbus 3 (Radu 33, 39, Munteanu 90)
Monchengladbach 1 (Delura 79) Att: 13,044

Hertha 2 (Gimenez 27, Pantelic pen 86)
Wolfsburg 1 (Madlung 18) Att: 40,272

Nurnberg 4 (Saenko 25, Gresko 50, Schroth 70, Magnin og 77)
Stuttgart 1 (Cacau 33) Att: 35,082

Sunday, January 28
Alemannia Aachen 2 (Reghecampf pen 10, Ibisevic 30)
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Schneider 44, 57, Voronin 54) Att: 20,800

Werder Bremen 3 (Borowski 5, Hugo Almeida 67, Mertesacker 74)
Hannover 0 Att: 42,100

Tuesday, January 30
Bayern Munich 0
Bochum 0 Att: 60,000

Monchengladbach 0
Nurnberg 0 Att: 33,116

Stuttgart 3 (Gomez 9, 59, Cacau 52)
Arminia Bielefeld 2 (Eigler 26, Ahanfouf pen 87) Att: 23,000

Wolfsburg 2 (Klimowicz 9, Hanke 72)
Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Thurk 63, Meier 69) Att: 15,097

Wednesday, January 31
Bayer Leverkusen 0
Werder Bremen 2 (Klose 15, Hugo Almeida 78) Att: 22,500

Hamburg 1 (Sorin pen 4)
Energie Cottbus 1 (Radu 9) Att: 52,484

Hannover 5 (Vinicius 16, 37, Fahrenhorst 45, Rosenthal 64, Lala 76)
Hertha 0 Att: 30,584

Mainz 1 (Andreasen pen 62)
Borussia Dortmund 0 Att: 20,300

Schalke 2 (Rafinha pen 23, Sichone og 74)
Alemannia Aachen 1 (Ibisevic 17) Att: 61,482

Friday, February 2
Nurnberg 3 (Saenko 13, Schroth 71, Vittek 86)
Bayern Munich 0 Att: 47,000

Saturday, February 3
Alemannia Aachen 1 (Reghecampf pen 26)
Hannover 4 (Jankov 5, Rosenthal 23, Huszti pen 31, Stajner 90) Att: 20,800

Arminia Bielefeld 0
Monchengladbach 2 (Insua 28, Jansen 89) Att: 23,114

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Mainz 0 Att: 51,300

Energie Cottbus 0
Bochum 0 Att: 11,650

Hertha 2 (Friedrich 78, Mineiro 90)
Hamburg 1 (Laas 33) Att: 47,354

Wolfsburg 3 (Hanke 16, 37, Klimowicz 72)
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Kiessling 29, Van der Heyden og 71) Att: 16,621

Sunday, February 4
Borussia Dortmund 0
Stuttgart 1 (Gomez 59) Att: 63,600

Werder Bremen 0
Schalke 2 (Lovenkrands 20, 73) Att: 42,100

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Schalke	20	14	3	3	36	19	45
Werder Bremen	20	13	3	4	52	24	42
Stuttgart	20	11	5	4	33	25	38
Bayern Munich	20	10	4	6	32	25	34
Hertha	20	9	6	5	32	31	33
Nurnberg	20	6	12	2	28	17	30
B Leverkusen	20	8	4	8	33	31	28
Hannover	20	7	5	8	25	30	26
B Dortmund	20	6	7	7	24	25	25
A Bielefeld	20	5	8	7	26	25	23
Wolfsburg	20	5	8	7	18	22	23
E Cottbus	20	5	7	8	22	26	22
Eintracht F'furt	20	4	10	6	25	33	22
Bochum	20	5	5	10	22	31	20
Alemannia	20	5	4	11	32	42	19
M'gladbach	20	5	4	11	16	26	19
Mainz	20	3	9	8	13	30	18
Hamburg	20	1	12	7	19	26	15

LEADING GOALSCORERS
11 Mario Gomez (Stuttgart)
11 Miroslav Klose (Werder Bremen)
11 Marko Pantelic (Hertha)
10 Roy Makaay (Bayern Munich)
8 Diego (Werder Bremen)
8 Alexander Frei (Borussia Dortmund)
8 Mike Hanke (Wolfsburg)
8 Kevin Kuranyi (Schalke)

GREECE

Jan 13: Ergotelis 3 Xanthi 1; Aigaleo 2 Apollon 0.
Jan 14: AEK 3 OFI 1; Kerkira 1 Aris 1; Iraklis 1 PAOK 0; Atromitos 2 Larisa 2; Ionikos 0 Panathinaikos 4; Olympiakos 1 Panionios 0.
Jan 20: Xanthi 0 Panathinaikos 0; Aris 3 Aigaleo 1.
Jan 21: Panionios 2 Ergotelis 0; Larisa 2 Kerkira 2; Apollon 1 Ionikos 0; OFI 1 Iraklis 0; AEK 3 Atromitos 0; PAOK 2 Olympiakos 3.
Jan 27: Panathinaikos 2 Panionios 0; Aigaleo 1 Larisa 2.
Jan 28: Atromitos 4 Kerkira 2; Xanthi 0 Apollon 0; Olympiakos 4 OFI 1; Iraklis 1 AEK 1; Ionikos 0 Aris 1; Ergotelis 0 PAOK 0.
Feb 3: Iraklis 2 Atromitos 3; PAOK 2 Panathinaikos 1.
Feb 4: Larisa 3 Ionikos 0; Kerkira 3 Aigaleo 0; Panionios 3 Apollon 1; OFI 1 Ergotelis 3; Aris 1 Xanthi 0; AEK 3 Olympiakos 3.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	20	16	2	2	43	14	50
AEK	20	12	6	2	41	15	42
Panathinaikos	20	13	2	5	32	17	41
PAOK	20	8	5	7	21	18	29
Aris	20	6	11	3	20	17	29
Atromitos	20	6	8	6	28	30	26
OFI	20	7	5	8	23	27	26
Larisa	20	6	7	7	22	28	25
Panionios	20	6	7	7	17	23	25
Kerkira	20	6	6	8	21	23	24
Ergotelis	20	6	5	9	20	22	23
Xanthi	20	5	7	8	12	14	22
Iraklis	20	6	4	10	20	25	22
Aigaleo	20	6	4	10	19	27	22
Apollon	20	5	7	8	15	23	22
Ionikos*	20	2	2	16	8	39	6

**2pts deducted because of crowd trouble during a home game*

HOLLAND

Sunday, January 14
Willem II 0
NAC 2 (Salmon 84, Zonneveld 90) Att: 14,000

Friday, January 19
Den Haag 1 (Rankovic 72)
AZ 3 (Mendes da Silva pen 45, Koevermans 57, Martens 84) Att: 7,405

Saturday, January 20
Heracles 0
NEC 0 Att: 8,412

PSV 3 (Simons pen 14, Kone 22, Farfan pen 35)
Heerenveen 1 (Afonso Alves 21) Att: 33,212

RKC 1 (Van den Bergh pen 27)
Twente 2 (Bakircioglu 13, Engelaar 85) Att: 5,400

Roda JC 2 (Cisse 26, Agustien 55)
Willem II 1 (Bobson 39) Att: 13,300

Sunday, January 21
Ajax 2 (Heitinga 11, Sneijder 21)
Utrecht 0 Att: 44,940

NAC 4 (Van Gessel 12, Zonneveld 21, Salmon 60, 81)
Feyenoord 1 (Van Hooijdonk pen 86) Att: 16,480

Sparta 2 (Schenkel 19, Medunjanin 39)
Excelsior 1 (Rojer 17) Att: 10,250

Vitesse 3 (Kaya 8, Lazovic pen 49, Benson 51)
Groningen 2 (Suarez 31, 63) Att: 18,955

Friday, January 26
Heerenveen 5 (Nilsson 2, Afonso Alves 39, 43, Pranjic 63, Friend 78)
Heracles 1 (Quansah 51) Att: 25,200

Saturday, January 27
AZ 3 (Arveladze 23, Olfers og 46, Martens 52)
Sparta 0 Att: 15,873

NEC 2 (Holman 22, Denneboom 35)
NAC 1 (Van Gessel 59) Att: 12,000

Utrecht 1 (Somers 42)
Excelsior 0 Att: 18,500

Willem II 0
Vitesse 0 Att: 12,000

Sunday, January 28
Feyenoord 3 (De Guzman 26, Bahia 34, Haristeas 85)
RKC 1 (Van den Bergh pen 53) Att: 40,500

Groningen 2 (Levchenko pen 20, Suarez 40)
Ajax 3 (Stam 52, Heitinga 82, Leonardo 90) Att: 19,777

Roda JC 2 (Saeijs 22, Oper 86)
PSV 0 Att: 16,233

Twente 3 (Heubach 15, Touma 58, Aissati 88)
Den Haag 1 (Delorge 32) Att: 13,000

Friday, February 2
Groningen 1 (Van der Linden 62)
Heerenveen 1 (Afonso Alves 70) Att: 19,846

Saturday, February 3
Excelsior 1 (Voskamp 34)
Twente 2 (El Ahmadi 33, N'Kufo 45) Att: 3,000

Heracles 2 (Tanghe 80, Everton 90)
Willem II 2 (Boutahar 30, Imschoot pen 90) Att: 8,500

NAC 2 (Salmon 27, 73)
RKC 1 (Berger 30) Att: 14,470

PSV 2 (Farfan 20, Cocu 65)
AZ 3 (Dembele 50, Jenner 62, Koevermans 88) Att: 33,300

Sunday, February 4
Ajax 4 (Sneijder 20, 32, 87, De Mul 34)
Feyenoord 1 (Haristeas 42) Att: 50,490

Den Haag 1 (Hoogendorp 33)
Utrecht 1 (Caluwe 17) Att: 7,160

Sparta 2 (Polak pen 52, Lopes 60)
Roda JC 2 (Bodor 6, Oper 78) Att: 9,750

Vitesse 1 (Junker 74)
NEC 1 (Beerens 53) Att: 21,200

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	23	18	2	3	58	14	56
Ajax	23	16	3	4	56	24	51
AZ	23	15	5	3	63	24	50
Twente	23	14	5	4	50	26	47
Feyenoord	23	13	3	7	46	45	42
Heerenveen	23	11	4	8	41	30	37
NAC	23	10	5	8	31	33	35
Roda JC	23	9	6	8	29	31	33
Vitesse	23	9	4	10	40	37	31
NEC	23	8	7	8	24	27	31
Groningen	23	9	4	10	35	43	31
Utrecht	23	8	6	9	28	33	30
Sparta	23	8	2	13	28	45	26
Heracles	23	4	7	12	20	44	19
Willem II	23	5	3	15	23	52	18
Excelsior	23	4	4	15	29	46	16
Den Haag	23	3	5	15	25	44	14
RKC	23	2	7	14	19	47	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS
22 Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)
17 Blaise N'Kufo (Twente)
16 Danny Koevermans (AZ)
15 Danko Lazovic (Vitesse)
14 Jefferson Farfan (PSV)
13 Wesley Sneijder (Ajax)

DUTCH CUP – last 16

Jan 23: AZ 5 MVV 0; Willem II 4 De Graafschap 2.
Jan 24: Ajax 4 Haarlem 0; Sparta 2 RKC 3 (aet); Twente 1 NAC 2; Utrecht 1 RBC 0.
Jan 25: PSV 3 Go Ahead Eagles 2; Roda JC 2 AZ'2' 1.

HUNGARY

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MTK	17	13	2	2	34	12	41
Debrecen	17	11	3	3	33	13	36
Zalaegerszeg	17	11	2	4	29	20	35
Ujpest	17	9	2	6	23	15	29
Fehervar	17	9	1	7	24	20	28
Diosgyor	17	9	1	7	24	22	28
Vasas	17	8	2	7	16	21	26
Paks	17	6	4	7	16	17	22
Pecs	17	5	6	6	19	25	21
Tatabanya	17	6	2	9	28	29	20
Gyor	17	5	5	7	22	25	20
Sopron	17	6	2	9	15	29	20
Honved	17	5	4	8	23	25	19
Rakospalota	17	4	4	9	21	33	16
Kaposvar	17	4	2	11	16	25	14
Vac	17	1	6	10	12	24	9

ITALY

Saturday, January 13
Empoli 2 (Raggi 26, Matteini 77)
Parma 0 Att: 4,292

Torino 1 (Fiore 58)
Inter 3 (Adriano 34, Ibrahimovic 60, Materazzi pen 85) Att: 25,126

Sunday, January 14
Atalanta 5 (Doni 38, 45, Donati 57, Ariatti 66, Ventola 90)
Livorno 1 (Pfertzel 52) Att: 11,639

Cagliari 1 (Suazo pen 15)
Ascoli 0 Att: 8,000

Chievo 2 (Semioli 58, Pellissier pen 63)
Catania 1 (Stovini 39) Att: 6,409

Lazio 1 (Rocchi 61)
Siena 1 (Cozza 87) Att: 24,357

Messina 1 (Parisi pen 90)
Roma 1 (Mancini 39) Att: 12,974

Milan 3 (Pirlo 6, Seedorf 35, Gilardino 77)
Reggina 1 (Bianchi 66) Att: 43,996

Palermo 2 (Caracciolo 32, Zaccardo 75)
Udinese 0 Att: 20,913

Sampdoria 0
Fiorentina 0 Att: 21,981

Saturday, January 20
Ascoli 1 (Paolucci 72)
Atalanta 3 (Zampagna 51, Adriano 84, Doni 86) Att: 8,573

Reggina 0
Palermo 0 Att: 11,745

Sunday, January 21
Catania 0
Cagliari 1 (Suazo pen 9) Att: 17,177

Empoli 2 (Saudati pen 55, Matteini 86)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 4,905

Inter 3 (Stankovic 19, Adriano 24, Ibrahimovic 71)
Fiorentina 1 (Toni 5) Att: 61,391

Lazio 0
Milan 0 Att: 28,948

Livorno 1 (Lucarelli pen 20)
Roma 1 (Totti 73) Att: 10,389

Parma 1 (G Rossi 75)
Torino 0 Att: 16,092

Siena 2 (Antonini 62, Portanova 67)
Chievo 1 (Brighi 25) Att: 6,837

Udinese 1 (Iaquinta 75)
Messina 0 Att: 13,948

Wednesday, January 24
Catania 2 (Caserta 53, Mascara 62)
Empoli 1 (Busce 55) Att: 7,500

Saturday, January 27
Palermo 0
Lazio 3 (Rocchi 45, pen 81, Siviglia 53) Att: 22,453

Torino 2 (Abbruscato 80, 90)
Udinese 3 (Obodo 18, Barreto 33, Gyan 64) Att: 18,987

Sunday, January 28
Atalanta 1 (Zampagna 30)
Catania 1 (Morimoto 88) Att: 12,455

Cagliari 0
Reggina 2 (Vigiani 48, 59) Att: 8,750

Chievo 0
Empoli 0 Att: 5,071

Fiorentina 2 (Toni 68, Jorgensen 82)
Livorno 1 (Lucarelli 27) Att: 30,523

Messina 1 (Parisi pen 78)
Ascoli 2 (Paolucci 90, 90) Att: 11,026

Milan 1 (Inzaghi 77)
Parma 0 Att: 41,752

Roma 1 (Vucinic 63)
Siena 0 Att: 30,824

Sampdoria 0
Inter 2 (Ibrahimovic 38, Maicon 75) Att: 27,519

Friday, February 2
Catania 1 (Caserta 60)
Palermo 2 (Caracciolo 51, Di Michele 83) Att: 21,000

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	21	18	3	0	46	17	57
Roma	21	14	4	3	43	17	46
Palermo	22	13	3	6	39	27	42
Lazio*	21	9	6	6	33	18	30
Catania	22	8	6	8	30	38	30
Empoli	21	7	8	6	19	19	29
Udinese	21	8	5	8	23	25	29
Atalanta	21	7	7	7	36	32	28
Milan*	21	9	8	4	26	17	27
Sampdoria	21	6	6	9	28	30	24
Siena*	21	5	10	6	18	22	24
Livorno	21	5	8	8	21	32	23
Fiorentina*	21	11	4	6	33	21	22
Cagliari	21	4	10	7	16	23	22
Torino	21	5	7	9	17	27	22
Chievo	21	4	6	11	21	30	18
Reggina*	21	7	6	8	26	28	16
Messina	21	3	7	11	21	36	16
Parma	21	3	6	12	17	36	15
Ascoli	21	2	6	13	16	34	12

**Milan had 8pts deducted, Lazio 3pts, Reggina 11pts and Fiorentina 15pts for their part in the country's match-fixing scandal. Siena had 1pt deducted for late payment of taxes*

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

GOLDEN SHOE

STANDINGS ON FEBRUARY 4

POS		TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Afonso Alves	Heerenveen (Hol)	22	1.5	33
2	Frederic Kanoute	Sevilla (Spa)	16	2	32
3	Maksim Gruznov	Trans Narva (Est)	31	1	31
4	Cristiano Ronaldo	Manchester United (Eng)	15	2	30
	Didier Drogba	Chelsea (Eng)	15	2	30
6	Daniel Nannskog	Stabaek (Nor)	19	1.5	28.5
7	Veigar Pall Gunnarsson	Stabaek (Nor)	18	1.5	27
	Dmitri Lipartov	Trans Narva (Est)	27	1	27
	Roman Pavlyuchenko	Spartak Moscow (Rus)	18	1.5	27
10	Diego Milito	Zaragoza (Spa)	13	2	26
	Ronaldinho	Barcelona (Spa)	13	2	26
	Francesco Totti	Roma (Ita)	13	2	26
13	Steffen Iversen	Rosenborg (Nor)	17	1.5	25.5
	Blaise N'Kufo	Twente (Hol)	17	1.5	25.5
15	Aram Hakopyan	Banants (Arm)	25	1	25
	Vjatseslav Zahhovaiko	Flora Tallinn (Est)	25	1	25
17	Danny Koevermans	AZ (Hol)	16	1.5	24
	Alexander Zickler	Salzburg (Aut)	16	1.5	24
19	Danko Lazovic	Vitesse (Hol)	15	1.5	22.5
	Mohammed Tchite	Anderlecht (Blg)	15	1.5	22.5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Francesco Totti (Roma)
11 Gionatha Spinesi (Catania)
11 Luca Toni (Fiorentina)
10 Rolando Bianchi (Reggina)
10 Cristiano Doni (Atalanta)
10 Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Inter)
10 Adrian Mutu (Fiorentina)

ITALIAN CUP – quarter-finals

1st legs - Jan 9/10/11; 2nd legs - Jan 17/18
Empoli v Inter 0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)
Milan v Arezzo 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1)
Roma v Parma 2-1, 2-2 (agg 4-3)
Sampdoria v Chievo 1-0, 2-1 (agg 3-1)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Jan 24/25; 2nd legs - Jan 31/Feb 1
Milan v Roma 2-2, 1-3 (agg 3-5)
Sampdoria v Inter 0-3, 0-0 (agg 0-3)

POLAND

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belchatow	15	9	3	3	31	17	30
Legia	15	8	3	4	29	16	27
Korona	15	8	3	4	24	15	27
Zaglebie	15	7	6	2	20	15	27
Wisla K	15	6	7	2	26	13	25
LKS	15	6	6	3	19	15	24
Lech	15	5	6	4	29	21	21
Cracovia	15	6	3	6	20	25	21
Groclin	15	3	10	2	17	15	19
Arka	15	3	9	3	18	16	18
Widzew	15	4	3	8	16	21	15
Gornik Z	15	4	3	8	18	24	15
Pogon	15	3	5	7	14	19	14
Gornik L	15	3	5	7	9	26	14
Odra	15	2	6	7	13	26	12
Wisla P	15	1	6	8	11	30	9

PORTUGAL

Friday, January 12
Boavista 1 (Kazmierczak 45)
Maritimo 1 (Marcinho 20)

Saturday, January 13
Belenenses 0
Sporting Lisbon 0

Nacional 0
Sporting Braga 0

Sunday, January 14
Aves 0
FC Porto 2 (Gonzalez 9, Quaresma 90)

Pacos Ferreira 1 (Luiz Carlos 80)
Beira Mar 0

Setubal 0
Naval 3 (Fajardo 10, Nei 49, Mario Sergio 83)

Uniao Leiria 0
Estrela Amadora 0

Monday, January 15
Academica 0
Benfica 2 (Ricardo Rocha 2, Leo 88)

Friday, January 26
Uniao Leiria 1 (Tixier 70)
FC Porto 0

Saturday, January 27
Belenenses 1 (Silas 86)
Benfica 2 (Simao 12, Luisao 36)

Pacos Ferreira 3 (Elias 18, Joao Paulo 53, Antunes 58)
Sporting Braga 2 (Wender pen 80, Andrade 88)

Sunday, January 28
Academica 0
Setubal 1 (Binho 53)

Aves 0
Beira Mar 0

Boavista 1 (Ricardo Sousa pen 56)
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Liedson 49)

Estrela Amadora 0
Naval 0

Monday, January 29
Nacional 3 (Bruno Amaro 9, Gregory og 12, Bruno 69)
Maritimo 2 (Filipe Oliveira 66, Lipatin 83)

Friday, February 2
Benfica 0
Boavista 0

Saturday, February 3
FC Porto 0
Estrela Amadora 1 (Anselmo 90)

Sporting Lisbon 5 (Bueno 75, 78, 90, 90, Liedson 83)
Nacional 1 (Bruno Amaro 26)

Sunday, February 4
Beira Mar 1 (Roma 44)
Uniao Leiria 0

Maritimo 1 (Lipatin 66)
Pacos Ferreira 1 (Luiz Carlos 90)

Naval 0
Academica 1 (Joeano 82)

Setubal 0
Belenenses 1 (Dady 9)

Sporting Braga 1 (Carlos 82)
Aves 0

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	17	13	1	3	34	10	40
Sporting Lisbon	17	11	4	2	28	11	37
Benfica	17	11	3	3	34	14	36
Sporting Braga	17	8	4	5	24	22	28
Uniao Leiria	17	7	4	6	14	16	25
Pacos Ferreira	17	6	7	4	19	22	25
Nacional	17	7	3	7	25	23	24
Naval	17	6	6	5	15	13	24
Belenenses	17	7	3	7	17	16	24
Maritimo	17	7	3	7	20	22	24
E Amadora	17	5	5	7	10	17	20
Boavista	17	4	7	6	19	21	19
Academica	17	4	4	9	19	25	16
Beira Mar	17	2	6	9	16	31	12
Setubal	17	3	3	11	9	26	12
Aves	17	2	3	12	10	24	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS
9 Helder Postiga (FC Porto)
7 Liedson (Sporting Lisbon)
7 Roland Linz (Boavista)
7 Simao Sabrosa (Benfica)
6 Nei (Naval)
6 Ricardo Quaresma (FC Porto)
6 Ze Pedro (Belenenses)

ROMANIA

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	19	17	1	1	41	10	52
Steaua	19	11	6	2	37	10	39
Rapid	19	10	6	3	33	14	36
CFR Cluj	19	11	3	5	38	24	36
Poli Timisoara	19	9	5	5	20	14	32
Gloria	19	9	3	7	24	19	30
Vaslui	19	8	4	7	25	29	28
Otelul	19	8	3	8	24	32	27
UTA	19	7	3	9	17	20	24
Poli Iasi	19	6	6	7	22	26	24
U Craiova	19	6	6	7	22	33	24
Pandurii	19	6	5	8	15	20	23
Urziceni	19	6	4	9	14	19	22
Farul	19	5	6	8	20	21	21
Ceahlaul	19	5	2	12	13	29	17
Arges	19	4	2	13	13	26	14
Jiul	19	3	5	11	9	24	14
National	19	3	4	12	13	30	13

SCOTLAND

Saturday, January 13
Aberdeen 1 (Lovell 90)
Inverness 1 (Rankin 86) Att: 10,300

Falkirk 1 (Gow 90)
Dunfermline 0 Att: 6,051

Rangers 5 (Adam 23, Burke 36, Boyd 59, 68, Ferguson 88)
Dundee United 0 Att: 50,276

Sunday, January 14
Hearts 1 (Mikoliunas 28)
Celtic 2 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 59, Jarosik 81) Att: 17,129

Monday, January 15
Kilmarnock 0
Hibernian 2 (Sproule 51, Fletcher 87) Att: 4,963

Saturday, January 20
Celtic 5 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 16, pen 61, 75, McGeady 69, Miller 82)
St Mirren 1 (McGinn 47) Att: 58,382

Hearts 1 (Bednar 74)
Falkirk 0 Att: 17,247

Kilmarnock 1 (Leven 61)
Dundee United 0 Att: 4,732

Sunday, January 21
Dunfermline 0
Rangers 1 (Adam 9) Att: 7,868

Inverness 3 (Dargo 20, McBain 30, Wilson 42)
Hibernian 0 Att: 4,577

Saturday, January 27
Dundee United 0
Dunfermline 0 Att: 6,295

Falkirk 0
Kilmarnock 2 (Nish 22, Naismith 28) Att: 4,696

Hibernian 2 (Scott Brown 66, Benjelloun 90)
Motherwell 0 Att: 14,280

Rangers 0
Hearts 0 Att: 50,321

St Mirren 0
Aberdeen 2 (Considine 8, 36) Att: 4,921

Sunday, January 28
Inverness 1 (Bayne 57)
Celtic 2 (Riordan 37, Vennegoor of Hesselink 90) Att: 7,484

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	26	20	5	1	52	20	65
Rangers	26	13	7	6	41	22	46
Aberdeen	25	12	6	7	33	22	42
Hearts	26	11	8	7	34	24	41
Hibernian	26	11	6	9	46	31	39
Kilmarnock	26	10	6	10	34	40	36
Falkirk	26	10	3	13	33	33	33
Inverness	26	7	10	9	30	35	31
Dundee Utd	26	7	7	12	28	48	28
Motherwell	24	7	4	13	29	41	25
St Mirren	25	5	8	12	22	39	23
Dunfermline	26	3	6	17	13	40	15

LEADING GOALSCORERS
14 Anthony Stokes (Falkirk)
13 Chris Killen (Hibernian)
12 Kris Boyd (Rangers)
9 Scott McDonald (Motherwell)
9 Steven Naismith (Kilmarnock)
9 John Sutton (St Mirren)
9 Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (Celtic)

SCOTTISH CUP – last 32

Jan 16: Dundee United 3 St Mirren 2.

Replays
Jan 16: Brechin 0 Cowdenbeath 1; Queen of the South 3 Dundee 3 (aet; Queen of the South 4-2 on pens).
Jan 17: Ayr 1 St Johnstone 2 (aet).
Jan 18: Hibernian 4 Aberdeen 1.

Last 16

Feb 3: Deveronvale 0 Partick 1; Dunfermline 1 Hearts 0; Falkirk 0 St Johnstone 3; Hibernian 3 Gretna 1; Inverness 1 Dundee United 0; Motherwell 2 Morton 0; Queen of the South 2 Cowdenbeath 0.
Feb 4: Livingston 1 Celtic 4.

SERBIA

SERBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star	16	13	2	1	27	7	41
Mladost	16	8	5	3	16	8	29
OFK	16	7	7	2	21	9	28
Partizan	16	8	3	5	22	15	27
Bezanija	16	5	9	2	19	13	24
Vojvodina	16	6	3	7	12	14	21
Banat	16	5	4	7	13	19	19
Hajduk K	16	6	1	9	11	18	19
Smederevo	16	4	6	6	12	16	18
Vozdovac	16	4	5	7	13	20	17
Borac	16	4	4	8	8	13	16
Zemun	16	0	3	13	5	27	3

SPAIN

Saturday, January 13
Espanyol 3 (Luis Garcia 31, Tamudo 65, Rufete 90)
Barcelona 1 (Saviola 60) Att: 31,450

Valencia 3 (Hugo Viana 52, Morientes 56, Ayala 79)
Levante 0 Att: 52,000

Sunday, January 14
Athletic Bilbao 0
Villarreal 1 (Forlan 69) Att: 38,000

Celta Vigo 1 (Nene 69)
Atletico Madrid 3 (Fernando Torres 12, 20, Aguero 53) Att: 12,000

Gimnastic 1 (Liera 61)
Getafe 3 (Vivar Dorado 12, Guiza 42, Javi Casquero 75) Att: 10,000

Osasuna 5 (Soldado 16, 58, Punal 29, David Lopez 57, Webo 72)
Betis 1 (Arzu 44) Att: 16,956

Racing Santander 1 (Garay pen 90)
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 15,496

Real Madrid 1 (Van Nistelrooy 41)
Zaragoza 0 Att: 65,000

Recreativo 1 (Javi Guerrero 10)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Arizmendi 19) Att: 18,000

Sevilla 1 (Kanoute pen 22)
Mallorca 2 (Nunes 47, Lopez 61) Att: 45,000

Saturday, January 20
Atletico Madrid 1 (Ze Castro 83)
Osasuna 0 Att: 40,000

Villarreal 0
Sevilla 0 Att: 20,000

Sunday, January 21
Barcelona 3 (Saviola 18, Giuly 67, Iniesta 80)
Gimnastic 0 Att: 74,343

Betis 1 (Xisco 86)
Racing Santander 1 (Garay pen 85) Att: 35,000

Deportivo La Coruna 0
Espanyol 0 Att: 14,000

Getafe 1 (Del Moral 1)
Celta Vigo 0 Att: 12,000

Levante 0
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 14,302

Mallorca 0
Real Madrid 1 (Reyes 77) Att: 18,000

Real Sociedad 0
Valencia 1 (Villa 28) Att: 19,834

Zaragoza 0
Recreativo 0 Att: 27,000

Wednesday, January 24
Betis 1 (Robert 37)
Barcelona 1 (Marquez 60) Att: 45,000

Saturday, January 27
Atletico Madrid 1 (Pablo Ibanez 75)
Racing Santander 1 (Zigic 73) Att: 35,000

Villarreal 1 (Marcos Garcia 68)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 22,000

Sunday, January 28
Barcelona 3 (Saviola 34, Ronaldinho pen 78, Giuly 86)
Celta Vigo 1 (Nene pen 67) Att: 68,549

Betis 2 (Robert 14, pen 67)
Valencia 1 (Villa 9) Att: 40,000

Getafe 2 (Guiza 28, 45)
Osasuna 0 Att: 13,000

Gimnastic 4 (Portillo 8, Campano pen 18, Pinilla 35, Cesar Navas 42)
Espanyol 0 Att: 14,500

Levante 2 (Dehu 69, Reggi 73)
Sevilla 4 (Kanoute 34, Kerzhakov 55, Tommasi og 63, Alfaro 77) Att: 12,707

Mallorca 2 (Ballesteros 38, Nunes 45)
Recreativo 1 (Juanma 49) Att: 14,000

Real Sociedad 0
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Iraola 12, 68) Att: 25,000

Zaragoza 1 (D Milito pen 79)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Taborda 21) Att: 26,000

Saturday, February 3
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Estoyanoff pen 46)
Mallorca 0 Att: 15,000

Espanyol 1 (Luis Garcia 85)
Zaragoza 2 (Sergio Garcia 55, 86) Att: 16,800

Valencia 3 (Ayala 14, Morientes 53, 67)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Mista 56) Att: 30,000

Sunday, February 4
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Urzaiz pen 90)
Betis 2 (Robert 18, Pancrate 75) Att: 39,000

Celta Vigo 1 (Borja Oubina 49)
Gimnastic 1 (Portillo 76) Att: 14,000

Osasuna 0
Barcelona 0 Att: 17,982

Racing Santander 1 (Garay 6)
Getafe 0 Att: 15,370

Real Madrid 0
Levante 1 (Salva pen 11) Att: 65,000

Recreativo 2 (Juanma 13, Sinama-Pongolle 46)
Villarreal 1 (Tomasson 77) Att: 17,000

Sevilla 0
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 40,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	21	12	7	2	43	18	43
Sevilla	21	13	3	5	41	21	42
Valencia	21	12	3	6	32	18	39
Real Madrid	21	12	2	7	28	18	38
Atletico Madrid	21	10	6	5	27	17	36
Zaragoza	21	10	5	6	33	22	35
Recreativo	21	10	3	8	31	28	33
Getafe	21	9	5	7	18	14	32
R Santander	21	7	8	6	20	24	29
Villarreal	21	8	5	8	20	26	29
Osasuna	21	8	3	10	27	26	27
Espanyol	21	6	8	7	19	24	26
Dep La Coruna	21	6	8	7	16	25	26
Betis	21	6	6	9	23	28	24
Mallorca	21	6	5	10	18	29	23
Athletic Bilbao	21	5	7	9	24	30	22
Celta Vigo	21	5	7	9	23	30	22
Levante	21	5	7	9	19	30	22
Real Sociedad	21	2	8	11	12	27	14
Gimnastic	21	3	4	14	21	40	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS
16 Frederic Kanoute (Sevilla)
13 Diego Milito (Zaragoza)
13 Ronaldinho (Barcelona)
10 Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid)
10 David Villa (Valencia)
9 Fernando Morientes (Valencia)

SPANISH CUP – last 16

1st legs - Jan 9/10/11; 2nd legs - Jan 16/17/18
Alaves v Barcelona 0-2, 2-3 (agg 2-5)
Atletico Madrid v Osasuna 1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Betis v Real Madrid 0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1; Betis on away goals)
Getafe v Valencia 1-1, 4-2 (agg 5-3)
Malaga v Zaragoza 0-3, 1-0 (agg 1-3)
Mallorca v Dep La Coruna 1-2, 1-1 (agg 2-3)
Rayo Vallecano v Sevilla 0-0, 1-3 (agg 1-3)
Valladolid v Villarreal 2-1, 1-0 (agg 3-1)

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Jan 31
Barcelona v Zaragoza 0-1
Dep La Coruna v Valladolid 4-1
Getafe v Osasuna 3-0
Sevilla v Betis 0-0

2nd legs - Feb 28

SWITZERLAND

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zurich	18	13	1	4	38	17	40
Sion	18	9	5	4	35	26	32
St Gallen	18	10	2	6	29	24	32
Grasshopper	18	9	4	5	34	19	31
Basle	18	9	3	6	39	31	30
Young Boys	18	9	3	6	30	23	30
Lucerne	18	5	4	9	19	26	19
Schaffhausen	18	3	6	9	18	32	15
Thun	18	3	5	10	11	34	14
Aarau	18	3	1	14	13	34	10

TURKEY

Jan 26: Erciyesspor 1 Fenerbahce 1.
Jan 27: Galatasaray 2 Ankaraspor 0; Genclerbirligi 0 Sivasspor 1.
Jan 28: Denizlispor 0 Gaziantepspor 2; Sakaryaspor 1 Konyaspor 1; Rizespor 1 Antalyaspor 0; Ankaragucu 1 Bursaspor 1; Besiktas 3 Manisaspor 1; Trabzonspor 0 Kayserispor 0.
Feb 2: Fenerbahce 2 Genclerbirligi 1.
Feb 3: Manisaspor 0 Trabzonspor 0; Antalyaspor 1 Sakaryaspor 0; Konyaspor 5 Denizlispor 1.
Feb 4: Kayserispor 0 Galatasaray 0; Bursaspor 0 Erciyesspor 0; Sivasspor 1 Rizespor 0; Ankaraspor 1 Ankaragucu 0; Gaziantepspor 0 Besiktas 0.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	19	12	5	2	38	17	41
Galatasaray	19	9	7	3	34	20	34
Besiktas	19	9	6	4	26	17	33
Manisaspor	19	8	5	6	33	26	29
Konyaspor	19	7	7	5	25	22	28
Kayserispor	19	7	7	5	22	20	28
Sivasspor	19	8	4	7	19	22	28
Genclerbirligi	19	8	3	8	21	21	27
Ankaraspor	19	5	11	3	22	20	26
Bursaspor	19	7	5	7	22	22	26
Gaziantepspor	19	6	6	7	20	25	24
Ankaragucu	19	5	8	6	21	18	23
Trabzonspor	19	5	6	8	20	21	21
Rizespor	19	6	3	10	15	21	21
Antalyaspor	19	4	8	7	19	22	20
Denizlispor	19	4	7	8	14	22	19
Sakaryaspor	19	3	7	9	11	23	16
Erciyesspor	19	2	7	10	16	39	13

UKRAINE

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	16	13	3	0	38	12	42
Shakhtar	16	12	2	2	36	6	38
Metalist	16	8	5	3	18	13	29
Arsenal	16	6	7	3	18	17	25
Dnipro	16	5	9	2	14	9	24
Karpaty	16	6	5	5	13	16	23
Tavriya	16	6	3	7	14	15	21
Metalurh D	16	5	6	5	14	16	21
Chornomorets	16	5	5	6	20	23	20
Kryvbas	16	4	8	4	17	19	20
Vorskla	16	4	4	8	12	17	16
Metalurh Z	16	3	7	6	9	18	16
Illichivets	16	4	3	9	13	20	15
FC Kharkiv	16	3	4	9	14	27	13
Zorya	16	2	6	8	13	24	12
Stal	16	2	3	11	10	21	9

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Preliminary round

1st legs - Jan 24/30/31/Feb 1;
2nd legs - Jan 31/Feb 6/7/8
America (Mex) v Sporting Cristal (Per)
5-0, 1-2 (agg 6-2)
Blooming (Bol) v Santos (Bra)
0-1, 0-5 (agg 0-6)
Cobreloa (Chl) v Parana (Bra)
0-2, 1-1 (agg 1-3)
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) v Tolima (Col)
1-2, 0-2 (agg 1-4)
Tacuary (Par) v LDU Quito (Ecu)
1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4)
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) v Danubio (Uru)
3-0, 2-1 (agg 5-1)

Winners entered group stage

Group stage draw

Group 1
America (Mex)
Banfield (Arg)
El Nacional (Ecu)
Libertad (Par)

Feb 20 El Nacional-America
Feb 20 Libertad-Banfield
Feb 27 Banfield-El Nacional
Mar 1 America-Libertad
Mar 6 El Nacional-Libertad
Mar 7 America-Banfield
Mar 21 Banfield-America
Mar 22 Libertad-El Nacional
Apr 3 El Nacional-Banfield
Apr 11 Libertad-America
Apr 18 Banfield-Libertad
Apr 18 America-El Nacional

Group 2
Alianza Lima (Per)
Audax Italiano (Chl)
Necaxa (Mex)
Sao Paulo (Bra)

Feb 14 Audax Italiano-Sao Paulo
Feb 20 Alianza Lima-Necaxa
Feb 28 Sao Paulo-Alianza Lima
Feb 28 Necaxa-Audax Italiano
Mar 13 Alianza Lima-Audax Italiano
Mar 21 Necaxa-Sao Paulo
Mar 29 Audax Italiano-Alianza Lima
Apr 4 Sao Paulo-Necaxa
Apr 11 Audax Italiano-Necaxa
Apr 18 Alianza Lima-Sao Paulo
Apr 25 Sao Paulo-Audax Italiano
Apr 25 Necaxa-Alianza Lima

Group 3
Cerro Porteno (Par)
Cucuta (Col)
Gremio (Bra)
Tolima (Col)

Feb 13 Cucuta-Tolima
Feb 15 Cerro Porteno-Gremio
Feb 27 Gremio-Cucuta
Mar 7 Tolima-Cerro Porteno
Mar 13 Cucuta-Cerro Porteno
Mar 15 Tolima-Gremio
Mar 20 Cerro Porteno-Cucuta
Mar 27 Gremio-Tolima
Apr 10 Cerro Porteno-Tolima
Apr 11 Cucuta-Gremio
Apr 24 Gremio-Cerro Porteno
Apr 24 Tolima-Cucuta

Group 4
Emelec (Ecu)
Internacional (Bra)
Nacional (Uru)
Velez Sarsfield (Arg)

Feb 13 Emelec-Velez Sarsfield
Feb 21 Nacional-Internacional
Feb 28 Internacional-Emelec
Mar 7 Velez Sarsfield-Nacional
Mar 14 Velez Sarsfield-Internacional
Mar 22 Emelec-Nacional
Mar 28 Internacional-Velez Sarsfield
Apr 3 Nacional-Emelec
Apr 10 Emelec-Internacional
Apr 12 Nacional-Velez Sarsfield
Apr 19 Internacional-Nacional
Apr 19 Velez Sarsfield-Emelec

Group 5
Flamengo (Bra)
Parana (Bra)
Real Potosi (Bol)
UA Maracaibo (Ven)

Feb 14 Real Potosi-Flamengo
Feb 15 UA Maracaibo-Parana
Feb 21 Parana-Real Potosi
Feb 21 Flamengo-UA Maracaibo
Feb 28 UA Maracaibo-Real Potosi
Mar 13 Real Potosi-UA Maracaibo
Mar 14 Parana-Flamengo
Mar 21 Flamengo-Parana
Apr 4 UA Maracaibo-Flamengo
Apr 10 Real Potosi-Parana
Apr 18 Flamengo-Real Potosi
Apr 18 Parana-UA Maracaibo

Group 6
Caracas (Ven)
Colo Colo (Chl)
LDU Quito (Ecu)
River Plate (Arg)

Feb 22 Caracas-LDU Quito
Feb 22 Colo Colo-River Plate
Mar 6 LDU Quito-Colo Colo
Mar 8 River Plate-Caracas
Mar 15 LDU Quito-River Plate
Mar 20 Caracas-Colo Colo
Mar 27 Colo Colo-Caracas
Mar 29 River Plate-LDU Quito
Apr 3 Colo Colo-LDU Quito
Apr 5 Caracas-River Plate
Apr 25 River Plate-Colo Colo
Apr 25 LDU Quito-Caracas

Group 7
Boca Juniors (Arg)
Bolivar (Bol)
Cienciano (Per)
Toluca (Mex)

Feb 14 Bolivar-Boca Juniors
Feb 21 Cienciano-Toluca
Feb 27 Toluca-Bolivar
Mar 1 Boca Juniors-Cienciano
Mar 8 Cienciano-Bolivar
Mar 14 Toluca-Boca Juniors
Mar 22 Boca Juniors-Toluca
Mar 28 Bolivar-Cienciano
Apr 4 Cienciano-Boca Juniors
Apr 12 Bolivar-Toluca
Apr 26 Boca Juniors-Bolivar
Apr 26 Toluca-Cienciano

Group 8
Defensor (Uru)
Deportivo Pasto (Col)
Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata (Arg)
Santos (Bra)

Feb 13 Defensor-Gimnasia LP
Feb 22 Dep Pasto-Santos
Mar 1 Santos-Defensor
Mar 6 Gimnasia LP-Dep Pasto
Mar 14 Santos-Gimnasia LP
Mar 15 Dep Pasto-Defensor
Mar 22 Gimnasia LP-Santos
Mar 28 Defensor-Dep Pasto
Apr 5 Defensor-Santos
Apr 5 Dep Pasto-Gimnasia LP
Apr 19 Gimnasia LP-Defensor
Apr 19 Santos-Dep Pasto

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round

Shadow play…Rodrigo Tiui of Santos attempts to shield the ball from Blooming's Sergio Jauregui in the Libertadores Cup preliminary round

CHILE

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan 27: Dep Melipilla 1 Colo Colo 2; Cobreloa 7 Antofagasta 1; Puerto Montt 1 Nublense 1; Union Espanola 1 Dep La Serena 0; Coquimbo Unido 1 Huachipato 3.
Jan 28: Cobresal 1 Audax Italiano 3; Univ Catolica 1 Santiago Wanderers 0; Lota Schwager 3 Palestino 3; Univ de Chile 1 Univ de Concepcion 0.
Jan 29: Everton 2 O'Higgins 0.
Feb 2: Dep La Serena 1 Univ Catolica 2.
Feb 3: Audax Italiano 3 Lota Schwager 2; Palestino 1 Puerto Montt 2; Union Espanola 1 Everton 0; O'Higgins 3 Wanderers 2; Univ de Concepcion 0 Coquimbo Unido 0; Colo Colo 4 Dep Concepcion 0.
Feb 4: Nublense 1 Dep Melipilla 1; Huachipato 1 Cobresal 0.

CHILE – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Audax Italiano	2	2	0	0	6	3	6
Huachipato	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
U Catolica	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
U Espanola	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
Puerto Montt	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Cobreloa	1	1	0	0	7	1	3
Everton	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
U de Chile	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
O'Higgins	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Nublense	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
L Schwager	2	0	1	1	5	6	1
Palestino	2	0	1	1	4	5	1
Dep Melipilla	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
U Concepcion	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Coquimbo U'do	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Wanderers	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
Dep La Serena	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Cobresal	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
D Concepcion	1	0	0	1	0	4	0
Antofagasta	1	0	0	1	1	7	0

COLOMBIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 3: Indep Santa Fe 0 At Junior 0.
Feb 4: Dep Cali 3 Quindio 2; Pereira 1 Bucaramanga 1; Indep Medellin 2 Dep Pasto 1; La Equidad 3 At Nacional 4; At Huila 2 Tolima 3; Cucuta 4 Once Caldas 1; Chico 2 America 1; Real Cartagena 0 Millonarios 0.

COLOMBIA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cucuta	1	1	0	0	4	1	3
At Nacional	1	1	0	0	4	3	3
Dep Cali	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Tolima	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Chico	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Indep Medellin	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Bucaramanga	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Pereira	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
At Junior	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Indep Santa Fe	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Millonarios	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Real Cartagena	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
La Equidad	1	0	0	1	3	4	0
At Huila	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Quindio	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
America	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Dep Pasto	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Once Caldas	1	0	0	1	1	4	0

PERU

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 3: Coronel Bolognesi 1 Universidad SMP 1; Alianza Atletico 0 Sporting Cristal 0; Dep Municipal 1 Melgar 2.
Feb 4: Alianza Lima 2 Sport Boys 2; Sport Ancash 0 Cienciano 1; Total Clean 1 Universitario 2.

PERU – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melgar	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Universitario	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Cienciano	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Alianza Lima	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Sport Boys	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
C Bolognesi	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Univ SMP	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Alianza Atletico	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sporting Cristal	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Dep Municipal	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Total Clean	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Sport Ancash	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan 7: Monagas 0 Caracas 1; Carabobo 3 UA Maracaibo 0; Aragua 1 Trujillanos 1; Dep Tachira 0 Mineros Guyana 0; Zamora 3 Portuguesa 2.
Jan 17: Carabobo 1 Trujillanos 0; Portuguesa 2 Dep Tachira 3; UA Maracaibo 2 Monagas 2; Mineros Guyana 3 Aragua 3; Zamora 0 Caracas 0.
Jan 21: Zamora 1 UA Maracaibo 1; Trujillanos 2 Mineros Guyana 2; Dep Tachira 1 Caracas 1; Monagas 1 Carabobo 1; Aragua 1 Portuguesa 0.
Jan 24: UA Maracaibo 3 Dep Tachira 0; Caracas 3 Aragua 0; Carabobo 1 Mineros Guyana 2; Monagas 0 Zamora 2.
Jan 25: Portuguesa 2 Trujillanos 1.
Jan 28: Aragua 0 UA Maracaibo 1; Mineros Guyana 2 Portuguesa 0; Trujillanos 4 Caracas 1; Zamora 3 Carabobo 1;
Feb 4: Monagas 0 Aragua 0; UA Maracaibo 1 Trujillanos 1; Caracas 3 Mineros Guyana 1; Carabobo 1 Portuguesa 0; Zamora 1 Dep Tachira 0.

VENEZUELA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zamora	6	4	2	0	10	4	14
Caracas	6	3	2	1	9	6	11
Carabobo	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Mineros G'ana	6	2	3	1	10	9	9
UA Maracaibo	6	2	3	1	8	7	9
Trujillanos	6	1	3	2	9	8	6
Aragua	6	1	3	2	5	8	6
Dep Tachira	5	1	2	2	4	7	5
Monagas	5	0	3	2	3	6	3
Portuguesa	6	1	0	5	6	11	3

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan 19: Tecos UAG 2 Tigres 1.
Jan 20: Cruz Azul 3 Pachuca 2; Monterrey 1 Santos 0; Morelia 3 Atlante 1; Guadalajara 1 Toluca 1; Necaxa 3 Jaguares 1; Queretaro 0 Veracruz 0.
Jan 21: Pumas UNAM 0 Atlas 0; America 4 San Luis 1.
Jan 27: Jaguares 2 Queretaro 0; Atlas 4 Tecos UAG 1; Tigres 1 America 0; Veracruz 2 Pumas UNAM 1; San Luis 1 Morelia 2; Atlante 1 Cruz Azul 0; Pachuca 4 Monterrey 0.
Jan 28: Toluca 1 Necaxa 1; Santos 2 Guadalajara 3.
Feb 3: Queretaro 0 Toluca 0; Necaxa 1 Santos 0; Morelia 0 Tigres 0; San Luis 3 Atlante 0; Monterrey 1 Cruz Azul 2; Guadalajara 0 Pachuca 1.
Feb 4: America 0 Atlas 1; Tecos UAG 3 Veracruz 0; Pumas UNAM 2 Jaguares 0.

MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atlas	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
Necaxa	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Cruz Azul	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
Guadalajara	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Jaguares	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
Queretaro	3	0	2	1	0	2	2

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pachuca	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Tecos UAG	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Veracruz	3	1	1	1	2	4	4
San Luis	3	1	0	2	5	6	3
Atlante	3	1	0	2	2	6	3
Monterrey	3	1	0	2	2	6	3

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morelia	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Pumas UNAM	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
Tigres	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
America	3	1	0	2	4	3	3
Toluca	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
Santos	3	0	0	3	2	5	0

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round

1st legs - Jan 26/27/28/Feb 3

Al Hilal (Sud) v Polisi (Zan) 4-0
Al Ittihad (Lby) v Mogas 90 (Ben) 3-0
AS Adema (Mad) v Anse Reunion (Sey) 0-0
Asante Kotoko (Gha) v Ports Authority (Gam) 1-0
ASFA/Yennenga (BuF) v Nasarawa United (Nig) 1-1
Canon Yaounde (Cam) v Etoile du Congo (Con) 1-0
Cotonsport (Cam) v Revenue Authority (Uga) 3-0
Diaraf (Sen) v Maranatha (Tog) 1-0
Esperance (Tun) v Renaissance (Chd) 4-0
Highlanders (Zim) v Pamplemousse (Mrs) 1-0
JS Kabylie (Alg) v Os Balantas (GuB) 3-1
Likhopo (Les) v Zanaco (Zam) 0-0
M'lodi Sundowns (SAf) v Royal Leopards (Swa) 4-2
Ocean Boys (Nig) v Kallon (SLe) 0-0
Petro Atletico (Ang) v Civics (Nam) 1-0
Primeiro Agosto (Ang) v Mangasport (Gab) 0-1
Renacimiento (EqG) v Ashanti Gold (Gha) 0-1
Sewe Sport (IvC) v Mighty Barolle (Lib) 3-1
St-Eloi Lupopo (DRC) v APR (Rwa) 2-1
Stade Malien (Mli) v AS Douanes (Sen) 1-2
TP Mazembe (DRC) v Police Xi (Bot) 3-0
USM Alger (Alg) v AS FNIS (Ngr) 3-1
Wydad Casablanca (Mor) v ASC Mauritel (Mra) 4-0
*Young Africans (Tan) v AJSM (Com) 5-1
Zamalek (Egy) v Vital'O (Bdi) 4-1

Still to play: Fello Star (Gui) v SC Praia (CVI)

Saint George (Eth) v Super Escom (Mwi)
– Super Escom withdrew, Saint George walkover;
Saint-Pierroise (Reu) v Grupo Desportivo (Moz)
– Saint-Pierroise withdrew, Grupo Desportivo walkover
**Young Africans v AJSM decided over one leg only because AJSM's ground does not meet CAF competition standards*

Byes to 1st round:
Al Ahly (Egy; holders), ASEC Abidjan (IvC), Etoile Sahel (Tun), FAR Rabat (Mor)

CONFEDERATION CUP

Preliminary round

1st legs - Jan 26/27/28

Al Ahli (Lby) v AS Coton Chad (Chd) 2-1
AS Togo-Port (Tog) v EGS Gafsa (Tun) 1-1
ASAC Concorde (Mra) v ASO Chlef (Alg) 0-1
Curepipe Starlight (Mrs) v Ajesaia (Mad) 1-0
Delta Telestar (Gab) v OC Bukavu Dawa (DRC) 1-0
Dragons l'Oueme (Ben) v Kwara United (Nig) 0-1
Hawks (Gam) v AS Denguele Sports (IvC) 0-0
JS Talangai (Con) v Astres (Cam) 0-2
Mundu (Zan) v Mwana Africa (Zim) 0-3
Notwane (Bot) v Defence (Eth) 1-1
NPA Anchors (Lib) v US Goree (Sen) 2-3
Ports Authority (SLe) v AS Bamako (Mli) 2-0
Prince Louis (Bdi) v ATRACO (Rwa) 0-0
Sahel (Nig) v Etoile Filante (BuF) 2-2
Saint Michel United (Sey) v Saint-Pauloise (Reu) 2-1
San Pedro Claver (EqG) v Benfica Luanda (Alg) 1-3
SC Bissau (GuB) v Satellite (Gui) 0-3
Textil de Pungue (Moz) v Simba (Tan) 1-1

Byes to 1st round:
Al Merreikh (Sud), CS Sfaxien (Tun), DC Motema Pembe (DRC), Dolphin (Nig), ENPPI (Egy), Green Buffaloes (Zam), HUS Agadir (Mor), InterClube (Ang), Ismaili (Egy), Issia Wazi (IvC), MC Alger (Alg), Tema Youth (Gha), Union Douala (Cam), US Ouakam (Sen)

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group stage draw

Group A
Al Arabi (Kuw)
Al Rayyan (Qat)
Al Wahda (UAE)
Al Zawra'a (Irq)

Group B
Al Hilal (Sau)
Al Kuwait (Kuw)
Esteghlal (Irn)
Pakhtakor (Uzb)

Group C
Al Karama (Syr)
Al Najaf (Irq)
Al Sadd (Qat)
Neftchi (Uzb)

Group D
Al Ain (UAE)
Al Ittihad (Syr)
Al Shabab (Sau)
Sepahan (Irn)

Group E
Persik Kediri (Ins)
Shanghai Shenhua (Chn)
Sydney FC (Aus)
Urawa Reds (Jap)

Group F
Arema Malang (Ins)
Bangkok University (Tha)
Chunnam Dragons (SKo)
Kawasaki Frontale (Jap)

Group G
Adelaide United (Aus)
Dong Tam Long An (Vie)
Shandong Luneng (Chn)
Songnam Ilhwa (SKo)

Group winners qualify for quarter-finals.
Bye to quarter-finals: Chonbuk Motors (SKo; holders)

Group stage begins on March 7

AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA – LEAGUE STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melbourne	21	14	3	4	41	20	45
Adelaide	21	10	3	8	32	27	33
Newcastle	21	8	6	7	32	30	30
Sydney*	21	8	8	5	29	19	29
Queensland	21	8	5	8	25	27	29
Central Coast	21	6	6	9	22	26	24
Perth	21	5	5	11	24	30	20
NZ Knights	21	5	4	12	13	39	19

**3pts deducted for breaching salary cap rules*

Top four qualified for play-offs

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Jan 20: AS Mont Dore (NC) 0 Auckland City (NZ) 2.
Jan 24: Waitakere United (NZ) 2 Auckland City 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland City	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Waitakere Utd	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
AS Mont Dore	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Group B
4R Electrical (Fij)
Marist (Sol)
AS Temanava (Tah)

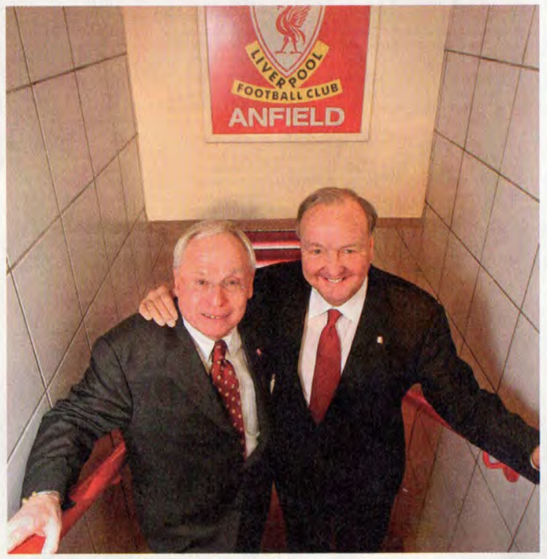
Group winners qualify for Final

THE Knowledge

everything you need to know about...

Foreign club owners

THE TAKEOVER OF Liverpool by American billionaires George Gillett Junior and Tom Hicks takes the total number of English Premier League clubs in foreign hands to seven. The others are Chelsea (Roman Abramovich, Russia), Aston Villa (Randy Lerner, United States), Fulham (Mohammed Al-Fayed, Egypt), Manchester United (the Glazer family, United States), Portsmouth (Alexandre Gaidamak, France/Russia) and West Ham (Eggert Magnusson and Bjorgolfur Gudmundsson, Iceland). Gillett and Hicks paid £5,000 per share, a total of £174.1million, and cleared debts of £44.8m. A new stadium, planned for Stanley Park near Anfield, and a "transfer war chest" for manager Rafa Benitez will cost the new owners an estimated £200m.



New owners...Liverpool's George Gillett and Tom Hicks

Arguably, Tottenham Hotspur are also in foreign hands since their controlling English National Investment Company (ENIC) is registered in the Bahamas. At one stage in the 1990s, ENIC owned or controlled clubs in Scotland (Rangers), Switzerland (Basle), Italy (Vicenza), Greece (AEK Athens) and the Czech Republic (Slavia Prague). The company has since sold its stakes in all clubs except Spurs.

Lithuanian banker Vladimir Romanov, the owner of Hearts in Scotland, has attracted controversy through his rapid hiring and firing of coaches and his employment of Lithuanian players and coach, Valdas Ivanauskas. Romanov also owns leading Lithuanian side FBK Kaunas and is majority shareholder of Belorussian club MTZ-Ripo.

Hearts head...Vladimir Romanov

Late last year, Indian steel billionaire Pramod Mittal paid £10m for Bulgaria's CSKA Sofia. Mittal owns the Kremikovtsi steel plant near Sofia.

In mainland, western Europe, foreign ownership of clubs is a rarity. Ukraine-born former Olympic triple-jumper Dmitri Piterman has made waves at Racing Santander and, more recently, at second division Alaves. But generally, the existence of sporting clubs owned by their members has prevented most clubs falling into private hands.

Jorge Vergara, owner of Mexican club Guadalajara Chivas, has branched out into the USA's Major League Soccer, running Los Angeles-based Chivas USA. The club play in the same colours as Guadalajara but have increasingly employed American coaches and players rather than Mexican. Vergara also owns leading Costa Rican side Saprissa.

Branched out...Jorge Vergara

In Brazil, confusion still surrounds the ownership structure of Corinthians. In 2004, the club signed a 10-year deal with London-based company Media Sports Investments that guaranteed investment for Corinthians but also gave MSI a 50 per cent share of profits. More controversially, MSI has also used the arrangement to transfer players – such as Javier Mascherano and Carlos Tevez – whose contracts it is alleged to own.

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